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Zamir meets with US Air Force chief

Trump's shift from military to economic threats against Iran regime impacts planning

• By YONAH JEREMY BOB

IDF Chief of Staff Lt.-Gen. Eyal Zamir met on Sunday in Tel Aviv with US Air Force Chief of Staff Kenneth Wilsbach and Israeli Air Force Commander Maj.-Gen. Omer Tishler to discuss Iran and other regional security issues.

The visit comes as US President Donald Trump has shifted away from military threats to boosting the economic sanctions against Iran to try to achieve nuclear and other concessions.

This shift doubtlessly impacts ongoing and even long-term joint military planning between the countries, including what US military assets will remain in Israel and the region.

Wilsbach's visit was unusual, as generally CENTCOM Commander Gen. Brad Cooper or CENTCOM Air Force Chief Lt.-Gen. Daniel Lasica would be expected to make such personal visits.

It was unclear whether Wilsbach visited because of the elevated levels of past and future cooperation between the countries' air forces during and following the early 2026 Iran war or whether it related to Lasica only recently taking office to replace Lt.-Gen. Derek France and needing more time to settle into his new role.

The officials discussed their assessments of the regional situation, including Iran and other security threats, advancing learning lessons from the joint campaign and future areas of cooperation.

At his inaugural speech in May, Tishler addressed France, saying, "Your presence here is very meaningful for us and for me personally. In the most complicated and sensitive situations, you and your forces have always stood with us. We won together, and we don't take it for granted."

US Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force Gen. John Donald Lamontagne also attended Tishler's inaugural ceremony.

Worried Likud weighs settling for rotation government with Eisenkot

Polls suggest neither side will be able to form majority government

• By ANNA BARSKY

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's associates in the Likud Party are analyzing the possibility of joining a rotation government with the center-left bloc that appears to be in the ascendency if, as polls currently predict, neither major party is able to enlist 61 seats to form a government after elections.

The Likud officials are discussing the possibility of sharing power in a broad government with a rotation between Netanyahu and Yashar Party head Gadi Eisenkot.

The main questions occupying them at this stage are: What could Netanyahu offer Eisenkot to convince him to agree to a rotation government, and how could Netanyahu persuade Eisenkot that the rotation agreement would be honored following the breakdown of the Netanyahu-Gantz government.

Among the possibilities being raised in closed Likud discussions is advancing Netanyahu toward the presidency in the future, creating both an agreed political exit path for him and a political guarantee that the premiership

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הליכוד
פריימריז 2026

PRIME MINISTER Benjamin Netanyahu casts his ballot at Likud's main polling station during party primary elections in Jerusalem last week. (Ohad Zwigenberg/Pool/AFP via Getty Images)

'Iran and Oman still working on Strait of Hormuz accord'

• By AMICHAI STEIN and Reuters

Iran and Oman are still working on the details of an agreement on the Strait of Hormuz, a senior Iranian source said on Wednesday, after the IRGC said the two countries had agreed how to share the waterway and its revenues.

The IRGC's spokesperson, echoing Tehran's official stance, also said the strait would not open unless the US met Tehran's conditions under an interim ceasefire agreement that was struck in June before unraveling. Those conditions include an end to the US blockade on Iranian ports, compensation, and removal of sanctions.

Despite the Iranian announcement, Oman has not issued a similar statement. A source familiar with the matter told the Post that there are still suspected disagreements between the two countries.

"The Omanis say they will not agree to imposing fees on ships, while the Iranians continue to insist that, from their perspective, this is a condition for passage through the strait," the source said.

The source also said that, according to Oman, contrary to the Iranian statement, there is no agreement on clearing mines from the Strait of Hormuz.

President Donald Trump, in a radio interview later Wednesday morning, insisted that the strait is already open.

"We take a lot of ships through the strait now. We're taking them in," Trump told conservative radio host Glenn Beck.

"Every once in a while there'll be a drone or a rocket or something shot, but it is a very functioning strait. A lot of oil is pouring out," the president said.

Iran and Oman have held on-and-off talks for weeks about controlling traffic through the strait, which handled one-

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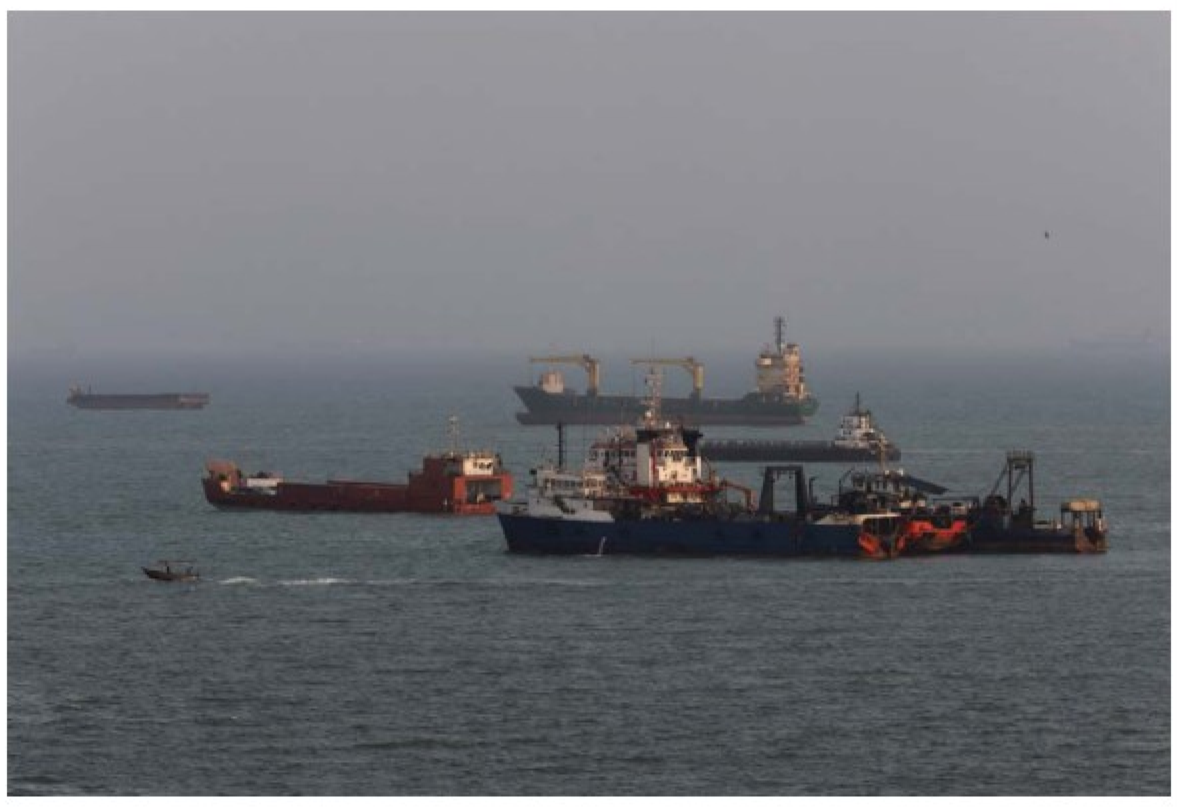

SHIPS ARE anchored in the Strait of Hormuz off the coast of Bandar Abbas, Iran, earlier this month. (Ali Saeedi/Getty Images)

Trump sends Saudi nuclear deal to Congress but says Riyadh must recognize Israel

• By TIMOTHY GARDNER

WASHINGTON (Reuters) – US President Donald Trump has sent Congress a proposed agreement with Saudi Arabia on civil nuclear energy while insisting the pact will only go into effect if the kingdom normalizes relations with Israel, a US administration official told Reuters on Tuesday.

The agreement, which was reached in July and would allow US companies to export civilian nuclear technology to the kingdom, was sent to Congress on Monday, according to the US official, who declined to be identified.

The Saudi embassy in Washington did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

It was not clear how Trump expects sending the nuclear deal to Congress, which has 90 session days to consider it, will advance his objectives.

"The president's position has not changed that the agreement will only move forward if Saudi Arabia joins the Abraham Accords," the US official said in an email, referring to US-brokered agreements between Israel and Arab and Muslim-majority nations to normalize relations.

Those accords, reached in 2020 and 2021, were between Israel and the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan.

Days after agreeing to the Saudi nuclear deal in July, Trump, who worked on a similar pact during his first term, set normalization as a condition for it to go into effect.

Former US president Joe Biden also pushed for a nuclear deal and wanted to tie it to the accords. Diplomats thought Riyadh was close to normalizing relations with Israel in 2023, but the start of the Israel-Hamas War changed the landscape.

Saudi Arabia has demanded an irreversible path to a Palestinian state before recognizing Israel.

The 30-year nuclear deal calls for the construction of AP1000 reactors, a project worth tens of billions of dollars that would benefit Westinghouse, jointly owned by Canada-based Cameco and Brookfield Asset Management.

The deal was sent to leaders in Congress and is expected to be handed to committees on Wednesday, two congressional sources said. Unless Congress objects to the deal within 90 session days, it will go into force. If Congress were to reject the agreement, Trump could veto that decision, which would require a two-thirds

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Otzma Yehudit calls to bar MK Abbas from elections

• By SHIR PERETS

National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir's Otzma Yehudit Party called for Ra'am chairman MK Mansour Abbas to be disqualified from running for the Knesset following remarks he made on Wednesday, saying Arab parties were forced to accept Israel as a Jewish state to avoid being barred from elections.

"The senior partner of [Naftali] Bennett and [Gadi] Eisenkot in a future government admits that he does not recognize the State of Israel as a Jewish state," the party's statement read.

"We would tell you that what he is saying is delusional, but we are not surprised. He is from the Muslim Brotherhood. The delusion is that Eisenkot and Bennett dream every night about how they will form a government with him."

Abbas's post was apparently a clarification after criticism over comments he made during an appearance on Channel 12's *Meet the Press*, where Amit Segal confronted him with previous statements he had made, including his assertion that "Zionist gangs conquered Palestine."

Segal said Abbas had indicated in the interview that he would not use the same formulation now. In his Wednesday post, Abbas maintained that changing his political language did not amount to abandoning his Palestinian identity or narrative.

"Is it not possible that different wording and a different political approach could actually express the truth of the Nakba, draw lessons from the historical experience accurately and wisely, and

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What's next with Iran after economic war, what's the impact on nukes, missile threats?

ANALYSIS

• By YONAH JEREMY BOB

The Trump administration's threat of an "economic D-Day" against Iran sounded impressive but so far appears to have dropped to a bit of a whimper.

It is not clear that any strategic change took place vis-a-vis Iran on Monday, though if Washington decides to go head-to-head with Beijing over Iranian oil, and if China moves in America's direction on the issue, those events could impact Tehran over time. But the keywords here are "economic," "if," and "over time."

The real "D-Day" (June 6, 1944) was not an economic sanctions campaign; it was one of the largest military ground invasions of all time.

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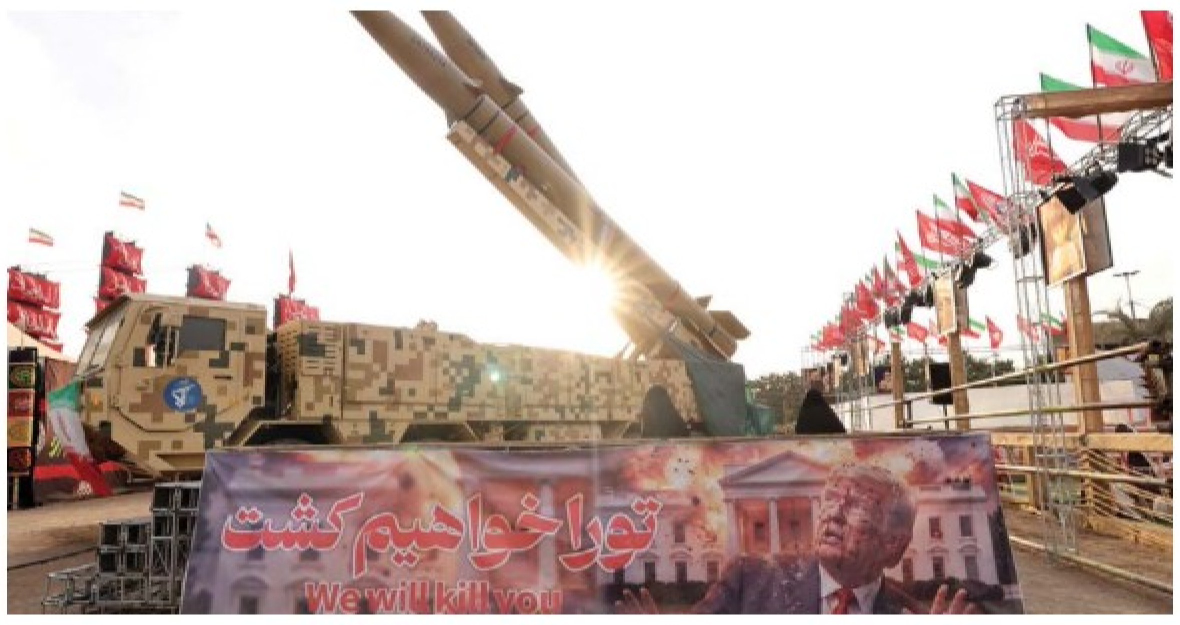

IRANIAN-MADE Zolfaghar missiles are displayed at Azadi Square in Tehran behind a banner picturing US President Donald Trump that reads: 'We will kill you,' earlier this month. (Atta Kenare/AFP via Getty Images)

ASSAILANT HAD MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES, HOSPITALIZED

Man acquitted of attacking nun in Jerusalem

• By SARAH BEN-NUN

The Jerusalem Magistrate's Court acquitted Yona Simcha Schreiber on Wednesday over his attack on a Christian nun near King David's Tomb on grounds of mental illness, ordered him to be hospitalized for up to six years.

Judge Ophir Tischler found that the evidence established that Schreiber did commit the acts described in the indictment, but he accepted the district psychiatrist's conclusion that Schreiber was psychotic at the time and could neither understand the nature of his actions nor stop himself from carrying them out.

The ruling means that Shreiber cannot be held criminally responsible for the attack because of his mental condition at the time.

He had been charged with assault causing actual bodily harm motivated by hostility toward a religious group, as well as common assault. On April 28, he pushed a nun to the ground, then returned and kicked her, and finally assaulted a passerby who tried to intervene.

The district psychiatrist diagnosed Schreiber with schizophrenia, finding that he had been psychotic for many years and lacked insight into his illness.

There was no conclusive evidence that specific psychotic thoughts directly caused the attack, the psychiatrist said. He nevertheless concluded that Schreiber's illness directly influenced his actions and that, at the time, Schreiber could not understand what he was doing or refrain from doing it.

The psychiatrist recommended inpatient treatment, a position the prosecution ultimately accepted after requesting additional clarifications.

Under the court order, Schreiber's hospitalization, dated from August 24, may continue for a maximum of six years, corresponding to the maximum penalty attached to the most serious offense in the case.

That period is a ceiling rather than a fixed sentence. A psychiatric committee may order his earlier release if it concludes that his medical condition permits. The committee has been instructed to notify both the prosecution and the defense of any such decision.

The court reached its final decision after several hearings over the psychiatric findings and the rights of the woman who was attacked.

WEARING HABITS and other religious symbols, nuns in Jerusalem are easily recognizable. Illustrative photo. (Dana Ben-Shimon)

At an August 16 hearing, the prosecution raised questions about the psychiatric opinion, prompting the court to ask the district psychiatrist for clarification. In a response filed the following day, the psychiatrist said he was convinced that Schreiber suffered from schizophrenia, had experienced psychosis for years, and was unable to understand or control his actions during the attack.

The prosecution initially agreed that the case should end with an acquittal and a hospitalization order. It then sought a short delay after an attorney representing the nun arrived at an August 24 hearing and said she had not been properly informed of the psychiatric findings.

The nun's attorney, Zaki Sahlia, questioned the assessment and argued that the fact that Schreiber targeted the nun rather than other people nearby raised doubts about whether the attack resulted from his illness. He also placed the case in the context of recurring harassment and attacks against Christian clergy in Jerusalem.

Tischler rejected the argument that the law required a further delay before the court could act on the psychiatric opinion. The law provides victims with an opportunity to state their position before a plea bargain or another negotiated arrangement closes a case, he wrote, but this was not such an agreement.

The opinion came from the state's own district psychiatrist and left the court required to address Schreiber's continued detention, the judge added. He ordered that Schreiber be held in hospital conditions while the prosecution completed its consultations.

At Wednesday's final hearing, the prosecution said it had fulfilled its obligations toward the nun, heard her position, and remained in favor of accepting the psychiatric opinion. The prosecution and defense then jointly asked the court to acquit Schreiber.

The nun's attorney said she remained uncomfortable with the psychiatric findings but respected the court's decision.

Schreiber's public defender, Idan Gamlieli, said the district psychiatrist had determined that the "regrettable incident" resulted from Schreiber's illness and that he required inpatient psychiatric treatment.

"We hope the medical treatment will help him return to optimal functioning," Gamlieli said. "It is important to note that we understand the complainant's difficult feelings and wish her recovery from the consequences of this regrettable incident."

The attack occurred at approximately 5:42 p.m. near King David's Tomb in Jerusalem.

Schreiber, a resident of the West Bank settlement of Peduel, saw the nun wearing clothing that identified her as Christian, ran toward her, and pushed her forcefully to the ground.

She struck her head and became dizzy. Schreiber initially walked away but returned several seconds later and kicked her while she was still on the ground. When a passerby intervened, Schreiber attacked him with punches and kicks.

The nun suffered bruising to her face and leg. The assault, which was captured on video, prompted widespread condemnation from Christian representatives, academics, and Israeli officials.

Sahlia told *The Jerusalem Post* that an appeal was not likely, but that he was "still studying the decision" and that there were other avenues to pursue.

Hamas, Dahlan faction seek alliance that could reshape Palestinian elections, deal blow to PA's Abbas

• By DANA BEN-SHIMON

Anxiety has emerged within the Palestinian Authority (PA) leadership in Ramallah following ongoing efforts by rival Palestinian factions, most notably Hamas and Mohammed Dahlan's camp, to form a political alliance ahead of the elections for the legislative council scheduled for November 28, several Palestinian sources told The Jerusalem Post on Tuesday.

A Palestinian figure who attended the Cairo anti-Abbas coalition meeting confirmed that no final decision has been made but added that the aim was clear. "We want to bring Abbas down; we want to end his dominance," he said.

Leaders and representatives from several Palestinian factions convened in Cairo last week to discuss a possible coalition, which was described as a "wide national list." The proposed alliance was said to include, apart from Hamas and Dahlan's Democratic Reform Bloc, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), Nasser al-Qudwa's National Democratic Forum, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and other groups.

As part of the PA's counter-effort to prevent this plan and block Hamas from gaining political influence by joining other political forces, the sources pointed to a Fatah delegation headed by PA deputy Hussein al-Sheikh, which visited Cairo on Monday, where discussions were held with Dahlan's associate Samir Mashharawi and possibly with other faction representatives.

In an interview with Arab media after the meeting with Sheikh, Mashharawi said that "unifying the Fatah movement can only be achieved through actions." He added that he had presented a set of points during the meeting to submit to President Abbas, who makes the decisions, he said.

A DRIVER gives a thumbs up as he passes a poster of PLO head Yasser Arafat (center) and former Fatah leader in Gaza Mohammed Dahlan (right) in Beirut's Palestinian Burj al-Barajneh camp in 2024. (Joseph Eid/AFP via Getty Images)

One Palestinian source close to Dahlan's faction said, "Abu Mazen's Fatah is now threatened politically because it know the public views it as corrupt and wants change."

He noted that despite years of animosity between Dahlan and Hamas, shifting interests, and particularly Dahlan's recent role in Gaza ceasefire arrangements, have brought the two camps closer.

Dahlan is considered a tough and challenging political rival to Mahmoud Abbas. The longstanding tension between them has increased over the years since Abbas ousted Dahlan from the Fatah movement's institutions, leading him to establish his own separate faction.

The source confirmed that there have been recent attempts by the Egyptians to reconcile the two leaders.

These developments have fueled questions among Palestinians, such as whether Abbas will still hold the vote in November or delay it if he perceives a real threat to his power.

During a briefing with Palestinian journalists a few days ago, Sheikh said that the elections would go ahead in November, stressing that they must include Jerusalem and Gaza. He also said Hamas could not run in the elections under its name or its official figures.

Ramle man indicted for murder of lawyer Feldman

• By SARAH BEN-NUN

A 24-year-old Ramle man was indicted on Wednesday for allegedly planning and carrying out the murder of his own lawyer over the handling of a NIS 18,500 insurance claim, shooting him six times at close range inside his Rishon Lezion office.

Ahmad al-Rajoub was charged in the Central District Court in Lod with intentional murder under aggravated circumstances, carrying a weapon and ammunition, destroying evidence, and obstructing justice. The case is before Judge Maor Even Han, and the next hearing is scheduled for September 16.

The indictment alleges that Rajoub decided to kill attorney Arbel Feldman after becoming angry over what he believed was the slow handling of a claim arising from damage to a vehicle involved in a traffic accident.

Feldman had represented Rajoub in proceedings against Harel Insurance. The NIS 18,500 claim was filed in the Rishon Lezion Magistrate's Court in June 2024, while a related dispute over insurance coverage was being heard separately in Rehovot.

The proceedings were repeatedly delayed while the parties awaited the outcome of the related case, according to the indictment. Rajoub allegedly complained that Feldman had failed to move the claim forward quickly enough and said that he was in serious financial difficulty.

During a recorded telephone conversation on July 20, prosecutors allege that Rajoub spoke to Feldman in a threatening tone, complained that the case had continued for nearly three years, and accused the lawyer of having "screwed him."

The two met at Feldman's office the following day. On July 28, the civil proceedings ended in a settlement providing that the insurance payment would be made within 30 days.

Exactly one week later, prosecutors allege, Rajoub arrived at Feldman's office carrying a loaded semiautomatic handgun concealed beneath his clothing.

Rajoub allegedly entered the office shortly before 1 p.m., approached Feldman, drew the gun, and fired six times at close range with the intention of killing him. The bullets struck Feldman's upper body, head, and hand.

According to the indictment, Feldman collapsed onto the office floor and died from blood loss. Prosecutors said just 21 seconds passed between Rajoub's entrance into the office and his departure.

He then reportedly ran down the building's stairs, fled to his vehicle, and drove toward Ashdod. At an unknown location along the way, prosecutors claim, he disposed of or concealed both the gun and his mobile phone to prevent investigators from using them as evidence.

About two hours later, Rajoub presented himself at an Ashdod police station and initially told officers that he had killed Feldman for a financial motive, according to the detention request. The same filing says he later exercised his right to remain silent during three formal interrogations.

Prosecutors said their evidence includes security footage showing Al-Rajoub arriving at the building, entering Feldman's office, and running away with an object resembling a firearm. Approximately 100 gunshot-residue particles were found on his hands and hair, according to a forensic opinion cited by the prosecution.

The evidence also includes the recorded July 20 conversation, telephone and message records, documents from the civil proceedings, and a firearms examination indicating that one weapon was used in the shooting, prosecutors said.

The murder was first reported after police received an emergency call from Feldman's office on Moshe Levy Street. "Urgent, urgent, they shot my office partner," the caller told police. Officers found Feldman with multiple gunshot wounds, and he was pronounced dead at the scene.

Feldman, a Rishon Lezion resident and father of three, had practiced law for more than 20 years and specialized in tort and traffic-accident claims.

US Senate Dems urge Netanyahu to rein in West Bank violence

• Reuters

US Senate Democrats on Wednesday urged Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to rein in a "surge" of violence by West Bank settlers and mass arrests of Palestinians by Israeli security forces.

In the letter to Netanyahu, seen by Reuters and signed by 45 of the Senate's 47-member Democratic caucus, the lawmakers noted increasing levels of "fatal violence by settlers."

They also appealed to Israel's leader to step up investigations into the deaths of nine American citizens they said have been killed by settlers or security forces in the West Bank since 2022.

The "significant surge" of violence in recent weeks has resulted in "a large-scale response by Israeli security forces, mass arrests of Palestinians, and reported attacks by settlers on mosques," the letter stated.

The letter marks the latest sign of growing friction between Democrats in Congress and the Israeli government over its handling of the West Bank, with many in the party also calling for curbs on US military aid to Israel over its conduct of the war in Gaza.

It was drafted by Senator Adam Schiff of California, Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer of New York – one of Israel's most prominent supporters in Congress – and Senator Cory Booker of New Jersey.

Last week, an Israeli man guarding a group of settlers walked onto Palestinian land and opened fire toward civilians, killing a 17-year-old and a 70-year-old man, officials said.

The senators urged Netanyahu to issue clear instructions to Israeli police and military to prevent and intervene in violent West Bank confrontations "regardless of the perpetrators."

Rights groups have repeatedly documented how Israeli forces are slow to respond to settler violence.

Israeli officials have said that authorities, including the president and prime minister, have repeatedly condemned violence against Palestinians.

The letter also called on the Israeli government to stop approving additional settlements and construction of "illegal outposts in the West Bank" and to take steps to remove existing outposts.

Democrats in Congress and many of the party's candidates running in this year's midterm elections have become increasingly critical of Netanyahu and his government in the wake of Israel's war in Gaza.

Amid a flagging US-brokered peace deal in Gaza and escalating settler violence in the West Bank, many Democrats have called for either significantly curtailing – or completely shutting off – billions of dollars in annual US military aid to Israel.

MK Cassif says IDF soldier assaulted him, tried to block his entry to Kusra in W. Bank

• By SHIR PERETS

Hadash-Ta'al MK Ofer Cassif accused IDF troops on Wednesday of physically and verbally assaulting him while attempting to reach Palestinian families in the West Bank village of Kusra, whose homes have been surrounded amid an ongoing confrontation involving extremist settlers and Israeli security forces.

"Yesterday, I tried again to reach the besieged families in the Palestinian village of Kusra," Cassif said. "During my attempt to enter the village, I was verbally and physically attacked by the occupation forces."

He shared footage showing him approaching the soldiers with his hands behind his back, in view of the camera, as he tried to walk past while the soldiers blocked him.

"Before the checkpoint, with my hands behind my back, one of the soldiers threw himself to the ground and claimed that I had attacked him. Later, they violently pushed me back to my car. I filed a complaint over this incident," he said, noting that he ultimately succeeded in reaching the homes and meeting the families.

"If this is how the occupation forces treat a serving member of Knesset, one can only imagine what Palestinians experience every day and the extent of the lies spread to justify this reality," Cassif added.

In his statement, he called for international intervention and reiterated his opposition to Israel's presence in the West Bank.

"The international community must intervene immediately and act to end the siege," he said. "But that is not enough. The occupation as a whole must end, so that justice can prevail and the two peoples of this land can live in peace, security, and prosperity!"

The IDF confirmed to *The Jerusalem Post* that Cassif and several civilians did arrive at Kusra and that the argument was regarding the entry of accompanying individuals who were not members of Knesset into the village, which has been designated as a closed military zone.

According to the IDF, Cassif arrived without prior coordination, and entry was permitted in accordance with the existing exceptions for MKs

Regarding the fight seen in the video, the IDF told the *Post*: "The conduct of the soldiers during the incident is being examined."

Cassif previously visited Kusra on August 14 when, he said, IDF troops initially prevented him from entering the village, before he was eventually able to cross the checkpoint and bring water, food, medicine, and equipment to reconnect water pipes that he said had been damaged by settlers.

The confrontation in Kusra followed days of unrest surrounding Palestinian homes on the outskirts of the village.

On August 12, settler extremists clashed with IDF troops after the evacuation of an outpost near Kusra, while footage showed roads being blocked and fences dismantled.

Palestinian residents subsequently said extremist settlers remained near their homes despite military efforts to remove them, leaving families feeling under threat.

The IDF later announced that it would investigate its handling of the events in Kusra, including the time taken to remove the outpost and the treatment of Palestinian families in the area.

Sparse tourism hits J'lem Old City market vendors

• By SAM HALPERN

VENDORS AWAIT customers in one the alleyways of the 'Arab shuk' in Jerusalem's Old City. (Hadas Parush/Flash90)

Shopkeepers across the Jewish, Muslim, Christian, and Armenian quarters of Jerusalem's Old City say that the decline in tourism, which has steadily worsened since the outbreak of war three years ago, has put businesses under prolonged strain.

Speaking to *The Jerusalem Post,* vendors pointed to a shortage of flights, high airfares, and lingering fears abroad over security as chief reasons that traffic into Israel has been suffering.

"The day-to-day tourism is horrible," Eitan, the owner of Mira, a family-owned shop in the Jewish Quarter, said. "Not too many people. There's not the traffic that there should be."

The main problem, he said, was that there were a reduced number of flights and that the flights that were operating were too expensive for many people, and that people are afraid to come.

"I know a lot of people who cancel their [flights] – like, sometimes, the airline canceled their trip, sometimes they could not come because of the prices," he said. "Once you have limited seats available, not everybody can come."

Eitan, whose family has lived in the Old City since 1968, has operated the business since 1984. He said they have been through "all the intifadas" and "all the wars," and said a meaningful recovery from the tourism slump will remain out of sight until the situation with flights improves.

"As long as the airlines are not coming back to Israel, I don't see any solution," he said.

Similar concerns were voiced elsewhere in the Old City.

Dia, a long-time vendor in the Arab Quarter, is part of a family that operates the well-known "Alabama – The Heart of Dixie" shop. Dia said the decline in tourism had left business "very, very slow," with many visitors still hesitant to come because of the war.

"It's very safe, the Old City," he said, but due to the image Israel has had abroad since October 7, 2023, business remained low. "Three years now, nobody comes," he said.

Hassan, a souvenir vendor near the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in the Christian Quarter, also painted a negative picture, describing business as "very weak" and saying there were "no tourists now."

He recalled that, before the war broke out, there was a period of eight to 10 months when business was good, "but now, it's zero."

Hassan said the solution lay in bolstering the number of flights.

In the Armenian Quarter, Garo Sandrouni, who operates a ceramics gallery with his wife, Sonia, said that, although the latest major round of strikes between Israel and Iran concluded earlier this year, he had not seen any improvement in the number of tourists coming through.

He said, however, with the Jewish New Year coming up next month, vendors expected to see some progress.

"Now, everybody is expecting in September that it [tourism] will be much more. Let's see. But now, there is not much difference from what it was like three or four months ago."

Like other vendors, Garo pointed to the cost of flights as the primary barrier choking off tourism to the country.

"They're much more expensive than before, and some people are also afraid to come," he said.

Sandrouni added that the fear came from three sources.

"People are afraid – first, from the war; secondly, from flights if they cancel; and thirdly, from the expensive tickets," he said.

He recalled clients who became stranded in Israel after foreign carriers canceled service, with some eventually traveling to Jordan to fly home.

Sandrouni added that the hits his business has taken over the last three years have been the worst in his four decades of operations.

"I have been here for like 40, 45 years on this street," he said. "It is the worst thing that we have witnessed. I mean, from the October war until today."

Speaking to the *Post* in June, tourism expert Dr. Eran Ketter pointed to broad structural problems hampering inbound tourism.

Looking specifically at the US, historically Israel's largest source market, Ketter pointed to geopolitical instability, the stronger shekel, limited air capacity, and higher travel costs as factors suppressing demand.

"Putting all of this together, we're coming into a situation that only people who really want to travel to Israel, and can afford it, are traveling at the moment," he said.

Ketter said greater political stability would be the "number one enabler" allowing the industry to move from a nearly three-year "survival state" into "growth mode."

Stability, he added, would also encourage airlines to resume service, bringing more competition and potentially cheaper fares.

Tourism Ministry Director-General Michael Izhakov, who spoke to the *Post* the following month, also identified the lack of flight accessibility as a major bottleneck to inbound tourism.

"When there are no flights, there is no tourism," he said.

The ministry has also been trying to stimulate demand through marketing and domestic tourism while preparing additional hotel capacity. Izhakov said the ministry had begun targeting Jewish audiences abroad more directly and had shifted some attention toward Israeli tourists when foreign visitors failed to return.

Earlier this month, Izhakov and tourism industry leaders met US Ambassador Mike Huckabee as part of the Israel Tourism Recovery Forum, where, according to the ministry, they discussed expanding direct US-Israel flights.

During the meeting, Huckabee emphasized his personal commitment to promote trips from the US to Israel.

"I will continue encouraging Americans to visit Israel, experience it firsthand, and discover the reality for themselves," the ministry quoted the ambassador as saying.

For the vendors in the Old City who depend on this traffic, though, the recovery of inbound tourism and the expansion of flights into the country cannot wait.

Still, despite the economic situation they described, some remained optimistic.

"I'm a positive person," Eitan said. "I believe things will be good again. When, we don't know, but hopefully soon. We are here, and whatever God wants to give us, He gives us."

HRF calls for US to prosecute deputy mayor of Jerusalem

• By YOAV ETIEL

The Hind Rajab Foundation submitted a request to the US Justice Department of Justice to open criminal proceedings against Jerusalem Deputy Mayor Arieh King, accusing him of involvement in what the organization describes as a "war crime of illegal population transfer" and "incitement to genocide."

The request was submitted ahead of King's expected arrival in the US next week for a fundraising tour on behalf of the Israel Land Fund, which he founded. According to reports by opponents of the visit, King is expected to travel to the US after visiting Canada, where events have been scheduled for him in Toronto and Montreal.

The Legal Center for Palestine, together with the HRF, also filed a complaint with the Canadian federal police's war crimes investigation unit over the past 24 hours.

King, who holds both Israeli and British citizenship, is one of the most prominent figures involved in Jewish settlement efforts in east Jerusalem. The foundation alleges that he has used his public positions and his work with the Israel Land Fund to advance the removal of Palestinians from their homes and the transfer of properties to Jewish ownership, including in the Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan neighborhoods.

The organization says these actions could amount to "illegal transfer of protected persons" under the Geneva Convention and may constitute a war crime under US law.

A central part of the complaint focuses on statements King made during the war. The foundation cited his calls to halt aid to the Gaza Strip, his support for protesters who blocked aid trucks, and statements attributed to him calling for the expulsion of Gaza residents and the destruction of its cities.

The complaint also includes a publication attributed to King that showed Palestinian detainees bound and kneeling on the ground. Alongside the image, he allegedly wrote that, if it were up to him, he would order D9 bulldozers to bury them alive. The post was later removed.

The foundation also accused King of "prolonged incitement against UNRWA." According to the organization, he referred to the UN agency as a "Nazi terrorist organization," welcomed the torching of one of its compounds, and called "to remove, destroy, and kill all UNRWA personnel." The organization linked those statements to King's efforts to shut down UNRWA institutions in east Jerusalem.

The foundation's US representative, Jake Rom, called on authorities to "arrest, prosecute, and punish him." The foundation's CEO, Diab Abu Jajah, said that "those involved in dispossession and attempts to destroy a people cannot move freely behind a wall of immunity."

The request is currently a unilateral action by the organization seeking to open proceedings against King, and does not represent an indictment or an arrest warrant. The Department of Justice has not announced that it has opened an investigation into King, and there is no indication that US authorities have adopted the factual claims or legal interpretation presented by the foundation.

King rejected the allegations against him, telling Walla that he is "proud to be a loyal emissary of the Jewish people in Israel and around the world."

"The antisemitic Hind Rajab Foundation has a problem with our very Judaism and the commandments that the Torah ordered us to uphold," he said. "This foundation is an extremist Muslim arm that sees Jews and the State of Israel as an obstacle on Islam's path to taking control of centers of power around the world, and this has been Muslim culture since its founding by Muhammad. This foundation is antisemitism under the guise of human rights activity."

King added: "It goes without saying that I draw inspiration from the current US administration, which supports the Jewish settlement enterprise in east Jerusalem and supports removing UNRWA from operating in Jerusalem, and which even froze the funding that the US provided for years to the Nazi terrorist organization that waves the UNRWA flag."

MAGEN DAVID ADOM IN ISRAEL
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Five ways in which US-Iran conflict is shifting

ANALYSIS

• By SETH J. FRANTZMAN

The confrontation between the United States and Iran has entered a new phase. The war that dominated headlines earlier this year is increasingly giving way to a broader contest involving economic pressure, maritime security, diplomacy, and power. This conflict has accelerated trends across the world, ushering in a new world order.

The Trump administration has made it clear that it believes the next stage of the campaign will rely less on airstrikes and more on isolating Iran economically while maintaining military deterrence. Tehran, meanwhile, seeks to mobilize its remaining friends and demonstrate that it still retains leverage.

Here are five ways the US-Iran conflict is changing:

Strait of Hormuz may be shifting from a battlefield to a shipping corridor

One of the clearest signs of the transition came this week, when US President Donald Trump announced that the US Navy had successfully cleared naval mines from the Strait of Hormuz. "All mines have been removed and/or detonated from within the International Waters of the Strait of Hormuz," Trump wrote on Truth Social.

The message concerned far more than just mines. It demonstrates Washington's intent to guarantee freedom of navigation despite Iran's many attempts to disrupt maritime traffic. Trump also warned that Iran had been informed that any vessel attempting to lay additional mines would be "immediately and systematically destroyed." The US has backed freedom of navigation as a policy going back to the Woodrow Wilson administration more than 100 years ago.

For decades, Iran has viewed the Strait of Hormuz as one of its strategic anchors. Around one-fifth of global oil shipments transited across the waterway. Iran's ability to threaten shipping has granted it leverage during crises. In 2019, Iran used this to great effect, detonating mines against passing ships.

The US's objective appears to be removing Iran's leverage while reassuring global energy markets that international shipping can continue.

Economic pressure now US's main weapon

The Trump administration has signaled that economic pressure is the centerpiece of the US's strategy.

US Secretary of the Treasury Scott Bessent announced the launch of Operation Economic Outcast. He described it as an unprecedented campaign to financially isolate Iran.

"In the Second World War, D-Day marked the historic beginning of a campaign with our allies to target and drive the enemy from its positions," Bessent said. "Today, in that same spirit, we are launching an economic onslaught against Iran's financial connections around the globe."

A MAN PHOTOGRAPHS an 'Iran war participation trophy' installation set up by the protest group The Secret Handshake in New York City last month. (Jordan Tovin/Reuters)

The Treasury Department indicates that it has mapped Iran's financial networks, oil smuggling operations, sanctions evasion mechanisms, and funding channels linked to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. The US's goal is to sever what it describes as every remaining economic lifeline supporting the regime.

Unlike previous sanctions campaigns, this initiative appears designed as an open-ended global effort rather than a series of individual sanctions packages. Washington is also framing the campaign as a choice for third-world countries: align with the United States or risk economic isolation.

China beginning to express concern

The new American strategy immediately highlighted another reality: the growing importance of China. Beijing criticized the new sanctions, warning that they would "only further intensify tensions" and arguing that its legitimate cooperation with Iran should not be disrupted. Chinese officials once again opposed what they described as unilateral American sanctions.

China has a 25-year economic deal with Iran. Notably, China benefits from the US being tied up in the standoff.

Iranian officials have similarly emphasized that Beijing remains one of Tehran's most important partners. Iran's Economy Minister Seyed Ali Madanizadeh argued that both China and Russia have shown no indication that they intend to fully comply with Washington's new campaign.

This reflects a broader geopolitical competition. For years, Iran has looked eastward as relations with Western countries deteriorated. China has purchased Iranian oil, invested in infrastructure, and expanded political ties. Russia has likewise deepened military and strategic cooperation with Tehran. Iran expects more from China, but China has shown itself to be pragmatically cautious thus far.

As a result, the US-Iran confrontation is becoming inseparable from wider competition among major powers as the world order shifts to accommodate. The effectiveness of Operation Economic Outcast may depend not only on American enforcement, but also on whether China and Russia decide to reduce their engagement with Iran.

Iran is responding to economic pressure

Iran's response illustrates that Tehran increasingly views economic pressure as another form of warfare. Madanizadeh described the new sanctions as an "economic terrorist attack" and warned that Washington should "expect an attack" in response. "We know how to play the game too," he said during an interview broadcast on Iranian state television.

Although the precise meaning of these comments remains unclear, Iranian leaders have sought to respond to economic pressure through so-called asymmetric means. Previous periods of sanctions have coincided with responses that included cyberattacks, threats by Iranian-backed proxy groups, maritime attacks, and efforts to disrupt regional energy infrastructure. Washington's successes against Iranian mines imply that Iran can no longer control the tempo of war.

Regional diplomacy continuing despite war

Diplomacy has not yet evaporated. On August 25, Oman and Iran issued a joint statement following consultations between Omani Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Albusaidi and Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi. They posted on X/Twitter about their new initiative.

The discussions focused on restoring safe navigation through the Strait of Hormuz while respecting sovereignty. Both governments said they discussed a phased framework that could provide a practical basis for moving forward after the recent conflict.

Oman has long played a key role in regional diplomacy. The Sultanate has relations with both Washington and Tehran, and has frequently served as a discreet channel for negotiations. Previous US-Iran nuclear talks also benefited from Omani mediation. This has led to US threats against Oman.

STRATEGY OR PHYSICAL WITHDRAWAL:

What does Washington's shift from airstrikes to sanctions signify?

• By DANIELLE GREYMAN-KENNARD

"America's impatience in this war has brought the US into the conflict without coherent policy, without clear strategy, and without even trying to create a coalition to support the operation," military historian and former head of the Strategic Horizons Unit in the UK Cabinet Office Lynette Nusbacher told *The Jerusalem Post* on Wednesday.

Nusbacher spoke with the *Post* after Axios reported that US Secretary of State Marco Rubio had told foreign counterparts in recent days that "for the time being" the US was not expected to continue striking Iran, instead focusing on sanctions and economic pressure.

"The Iranian economy is in free fall, and the regime's military has been decimated," State Department spokesman Tommy Pigott told Axios, adding, "We are cutting off every financial lifeline the regime has remaining."

Iran's currency plummeted earlier in the week in response to Washington's Operation Economic Outcase, hitting a record-low open-market rate of 2.02 million rials to the dollar. Numerous reports, despite the denial of Iran's Central Bank Governor Abdolnasser Hemmati, have claimed Iran is in a state of severe inflation.

Despite the apparent success of the American blockade and sanctions campaign, Iranian officials have repeatedly expressed that they would not falter in their demand to maintain control over the vital Strait of Hormuz. The Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee even advanced plans to charge fees for vessels crossing the waterway earlier this week.

The non-partisan, non-profit, public policy research Institute for the Study of War (ISW) has repeatedly assessed that financial pressure was not convincing Iranian officials to compromise. With that assessment in mind, Nusbacher was asked whether the shift from kinetic action to financial pressure was part of a legitimate strategy or a way for the United States to quietly phase itself out of the war.

Nusbacher was blunt in her assessment that Washington was "desperate" to leave the "quagmire," a desperation she claimed the Islamic regime was very much aware of.

The war has been largely a battle of patience, of whether the world's economy could tolerate the interruption of 20% of its oil supply longer than the Islamic Republic could tolerate a blockade and airstrikes, she explained. Given that the Islamic regime is no stranger to war, she said it was obvious Tehran would persevere through the latest conflict, where Washington's strategic aims and mechanisms were not fully conceived from the outset.

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump listens as he stands next to US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent at a NATO leaders' summit in Ankara, Turkey, last year. (Umit Bektas/Reuters)

"The Iranian regime was baptized in blood during the Iran-Iraq War, and from an Iranian point of view, the desultory American missile attacks of the past few months have been a pale shadow," she said. "This is why America is not winning its war against Iran."

According to the National Library of Medicine's National Center for Biotechnology Information, between some 188,015 and 217,489 Iranians were killed during the Iran-Iraq War. The brutal eight-year war, which began only a year after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, has meant that short spouts of conflict with the US are bearable for the regime and its supporters, Nusbacher noted.

"The US has lavishly expended ordnance against Iran and, based on the lack of strategic aims achieved, they've been spraying it all up against a wall. Now that American stocks of missiles are so depleted, the White House has gone back to the drawing board," she said.

Though Pentagon spokesperson Sean Parnell told *The Wall Street Journal* last Wednesday that reports of a munitions shortage were false, multiple reports from Reuters and *The Washington Post* have claimed that the war against Iran has burned through supplies, including interceptors. Multiple sources told CNN earlier this month that the US military had exhausted nearly 80% of its THAAD missile inventory.

Nusbacher said that the Trump administration had "finally figured out that the Iranians can't be coerced without a significantly greater force package than the Americans are willing to send to the Gulf."

Though former US president Barack Obama's nuclear agreement with Iran was highly controversial [using financial incentives and diplomacy against Iran's nuclear program], Nusbacher said that with the kinetic failure, US President Donald Trump will "at last give it a try."

She added, "If the National Security shop in the White House hadn't been gutted and sidelined," the Trump administration would have tried economic means to rein in the regime "without firing a shot" and could have won.

Asserting that financial warfare should have been Trump's first move, not the airstrikes, Nusbacher suggested he was spurred "to shoot first and negotiate later" by the knowledge that neither Russia nor China were interested in putting intense pressure on Iran and by the unfounded belief that he could "depose the Iranian regime with a couple of weeks of attack from the air."

"As the US looks for a way out of its Iran quagmire, the administration isn't impatient; it's desperate, and the Iranians can smell it," she concluded.

Professor Chuck Freilich, an expert on US Middle East policy, told the *Post* he also thought the shift to financial pressure was "very long overdue" and "should have preceded military action, [as] part of a phased approach."

"It is another example of Trump's utter lack of strategy. Having failed militarily and diplomatically and with the upcoming midterms weighing heavily, he finally realized that this was a highly effective mechanism at his disposal," Freilich said, though he admitted Iranians have "learned to live with sanctions" and that such a move would only increase pressure on the regime, not solve the problem entirely.

"The pressure now is becoming very heavy and at some point it may bring the people back out into the streets," he said.

If nothing else, Freilich said that the financial strategy "buys time" for Trump, who will eventually have to face the decision of "whether to leave it just with sanctions and failure or to resume military action" to achieve the US's objectives.

Israeli arms, Iranian drones, and Turkish oil: Azerbaijan's high-stakes balancing act

ANALYSIS

• By GABRIEL COLODRO/The Media Line

"We cannot close our eyes and say there is no Iran, there is no Russia. There are."

Nargiz Mammadova, a research fellow in international relations at the CASPIA Center, was describing the reality Azerbaijan confronts whenever it looks at the map. She said decisions made in Moscow or Tehran could not be dismissed as distant developments. Both countries border Azerbaijan, placing instability in either one directly inside Baku's security calculations.

Mammadova was among 13 Muslim professionals from Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan brought to Israel by Sharaka, an NGO founded after the 2020 signing of the Abraham Accords to promote people-to-people diplomacy between Israelis and communities across the Arab and Muslim world.

Holocaust remembrance and meetings about Israeli society were part of the visit, but regional security was never far from the discussion.

For the Azerbaijani participants, Israel is one element of a crowded diplomatic picture that includes Russia, Iran, Turkey, Armenia, and the wider South Caucasus.

The result is a foreign policy built less around choosing sides than keeping several doors open.

Azerbaijan buys Israeli weapons, regards Turkey as a vital ally, trades with Russia, shares a long border with Iran, and is pursuing peace with Armenia after decades of conflict.

"If you look at the map in the South Caucasus, Azerbaijan has five neighbors, and two of them are in a war situation, or kind of war situation," Mammadova said.

She described the ability to work with competing powers as a defining characteristic of Azerbaijani diplomacy. Baku cannot afford to organize its foreign policy around one dominant relationship, she said.

Mammadova applied the same reasoning to Armenia, saying agreements between governments must be accompanied by "building bridges between people" and greater trust between the two societies.

Farid Shukurlu, an international law and security researcher and nonresident fellow at the Research Institute for European and American Studies, said that his criticism was directed at the Iranian regime and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), not at Iranian society.

"Even though Azerbaijan's position was formally neutrality, the country was still targeted by the IRGC in the Nakhchivan enclave," he said.

Nakhchivan is an Azerbaijani exclave separated from the rest of the country by Armenian territory. Azerbaijan said four drones arriving from Iran struck the region on March 5, wounding four people and damaging Nakhchivan International Airport and a school.

Iran denied responsibility and promised an investigation.

The incident demonstrated, in Shukurlu's view, that avoiding direct participation in a conflict does not necessarily protect Azerbaijan from pressure or military spillover from its southern neighbor.

Those concerns have contributed to stronger defense ties with Israel. Azerbaijan has purchased Israeli weapons for years and used Israeli-made systems during its conflicts with Armenian forces over Nagorno-Karabakh.

Shukurlu said that "the military cooperation between Azerbaijan and Israel is at an all-time high" but rejected suggestions that Baku would allow the relationship to turn Azerbaijani territory into a base for military action.

"It's also in Azerbaijan's national security concept not to get dragged into regional conflicts," he said.

"Azerbaijani territory will never be used against a third state."

Baku faces a different balancing problem when relations deteriorate between Israel and Turkey.

Ankara remains one of Azerbaijan's closest political and security partners, while Israel has become an important supplier of military technology.

Shukurlu said Azerbaijani officials see no reason to sacrifice either relationship.

"Azerbaijan is not going to give up on Israel and Azerbaijan is not going to give up on Turkey because these countries are equally important to our security, to our existence, and to our image in the international arena," he noted.

Energy makes the triangle even harder to separate.

Ibrahim Mammadov, head of the Turkic-Western Engagement Initiative and a visiting research fellow at the Danube Institute, pointed to the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, which carries crude oil from Azerbaijan through Georgia to Turkey's Mediterranean port of Ceyhan. Some of that oil is then loaded onto tankers bound for Israel.

"I do not believe that it will ever stop because, for Azerbaijan, it's an extremely important pipeline," he said.

Closing the route would hurt Azerbaijan by restricting one of its principal export channels and it would hurt Israel by reducing a major source of crude oil. Turkey receives transit and port benefits, while the state-owned Turkish Petroleum Corporation holds a stake in the pipeline consortium.

The same network that binds the three countries together economically also gives Baku a reason to prevent disputes between Israel and Turkey from becoming direct confrontations.

Azerbaijan has already hosted several rounds of talks between Israeli and Turkish officials seeking to prevent clashes in Syria, where both countries maintain competing security interests.

"We know that there have been formal and informal talks that were held in Baku," Mammadov said.

He wants Azerbaijan to continue serving as a meeting place when its two partners cannot speak easily elsewhere.

AZERBAIJAN'S PRESIDENT Ilham Aliev attends a press conference in Berlin last month. (Tobias Schwarz/AFP via Getty Images)

Turkey suddenly sees a regional rival – Israel

ANALYSIS

• By SETH J. FRANTZMAN

TURKEY'S PRESIDENT Recep Tayyip Erdogan (right) shakes hands with Palestinian Authority head Mahmoud Abbas at the Presidential Complex in Ankara earlier this month. (Adem Altan/AFP via Getty Images)

Turkey's ruling AKP party has been hostile to Israel for many years. It ties its hostility to its support for Palestinians. However, Turkey's policy affects more than just the Palestinians; it has been increasingly sympathetic to Hamas over the years.

From Turkey's point of view, it benefits from supporting Hamas because the Palestinians widely support Hamas. Ankara's link to Hamas runs even deeper, and likely has roots in the Muslim Brotherhood ideology, which influences both Hamas and the AKP.

These days, however, Turkey's stance on Israel is beginning to shift. Where once it could look at Israel through the Palestinian lens and condemn Israel at international forums, it may now see Israel as a potential regional rival.

This shift is not lost on Jerusalem. Many parties, both in Israel and abroad, are depicting Turkey as an emerging threat akin to Iran. This can't be good news for US policymakers who see both Turkey and Israel as key allies.

This contradiction would not be the first for the US, however. In the past, the US had to balance Saudi Arabia and Israel as allies in the 1980s and 1990s, even when the two were at odds with each other.

A new article at Al Jazeera notes: "Ankara views Israeli attempts to undermine the Syrian transition as having direct repercussions for its national security." This was written after a recent Israeli airstrike in Syria, which was intended to deter Turkey from expanding its role in Syria. Israel has shifted its priorities in Syria; it has gone from targeting Iranian entrenchment before the fall of the Assad regime to being wary of Turkish entrenchment.

"Therefore, Turkey is no longer seeing Israel solely through the prism of the Palestinian question," the article notes. "Rather, it increasingly sees it as a national security challenge, with Israeli regional revisionism threatening its interests."

Let's recall how this development occurred. Turkey and Israel have both been led by right-wing and religious parties over the past two decades. In a sense, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have had similar careers. Both have harnessed their countries' politics and sought to build right-wing, religious coalitions to run countries previously led by more secular, center-left nationalist parties.

This trajectory has become increasingly common all over the world. However, in the specific case of Turkey and Israel, it appears to have led to clashes instead of partnership.

In the past, it was Turkey that appeared to have the upper hand in the region. Turkey's population is eight times the size of Israel, and its territory is 36 times larger.

Despite this, Israel's economic power is quickly catching up to Turkey. In fact, Israeli defense companies are outpacing Turkish defense companies. Population and geography matter, but Israel has a more dynamic economy.

In the wake of the Abraham Accords and other developments, Israel may be seen as a rival on various fronts with Turkey.

Let's go back a few years and recall that Turkey and Israel were once friends from the 1950s to the 1990s. However, the rise of the AKP and Israel's continuing conflicts led to a rapid decline in relations after 2009. The Israeli raid on the Mavi Marmara, which resulted in the deaths of 10 Turkish citizens, harmed the already fraying ties.

There were some attempts to reconcile the relationship between the two countries. President Isaac Herzog even went to Turkey in 2022, but the attempts at reconciliation didn't hold. October 7 opened up even more anti-Israel rhetoric from Turkey.

The real story may, in fact, be found in Ankara's foreign policy and Israel's own paradigm shift. Turkey once had "zero problems" with its neighbors. The Syrian civil war, however, led to Turkey invading parts of northern Syria. By 2019, Turkey was having a new crisis every week.

Turkey hosted Hamas leaders and offered them the red carpet. This, in turn, threatened Greece and Cyprus, which eventually pushed Israel, Greece, and Cyprus closer together.

Over the years, Turkey became increasingly belligerent in the eastern Mediterranean. Turkey intervened in Libya. It also threatened Saudi Arabia and the UAE. It backed Qatar in the 2017 Gulf crisis. It backed the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and was outraged by the death of former Egyptian leader Mohammed Morsi in custody.

In 2022, the world saw a decidedly different Turkey. It moved to reconcile with Saudi Arabia and Egypt, and sought to reduce tensions in Libya. Although Turkey was still mobilizing for a larger role in places like Africa, it also had to balance its ties with Ukraine and Russia.

In Syria, Turkey believed the Assad regime would remain. It was handed a new chance in Syria when the Assad regime fell in December 2024.

Turkey was used to playing a major role on several continents. It was a member of NATO and had a foothold in Europe. It once even considered joining the EU. Years ago, I interviewed Yasar Yakis, who had been the chairman of the EU Committee of the Turkish parliament. Turkey shifted its view from a European concept to one that sought to play a larger role in the Islamic world.

As such, one can see in Ankara's drive for power as a desire to play a role in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. As a country that inherits some of the policies of the Ottoman Empire and the Caliphate that once sat in Istanbul, Turkey naturally has a global view.

Israel's foreign policy has not always been a global one. Once upon a time, in the 1950s and 1960s, it had a periphery doctrine when it was surrounded by hostile Arab countries. Later, it was able to broker peace with Egypt and Jordan. With the Trump administration's help, Israel also made peace with the UAE, Bahrain, and Morocco.

Although Israel has friends in Asia and Europe, it has had to juggle its policies so it focuses only on a few issues at a time. This precarious balance can also be seen in Israel's struggle to maintain well-staffed embassies abroad, even in the countries it has ties with.

The post-October 7 doctrine has changed Israel's approach. Now, Israel believes it will have a long-term role in running half of Gaza, as well as a swath of southern Lebanon and a buffer zone in Syria.

Israel is growing increasingly concerned about an emerging Sunni alliance of Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Pakistan, Syria, and Egypt. These countries – and potentially others – that are troubled by Israel's rising power.

Turkey, therefore, has begun to think of Israel as its regional rival. Because of this concern, Turkey has decided to tone down some of its current rhetoric. Turkish officials, such as Foreign Affairs Minister Hakan Fidan, are likely advising Erdogan not to rush into a confrontation at the moment. Gone are the days when Turkey would warn that it would "suddenly" come one night – the rhetorical flourish Erdogan would often use when threatening other countries.

Apparently, Turkey sees the bombing in Syria as a threat, and wonders if Israel may "suddenly" come one night. There is no doubt that, now, some of the cooler heads in Turkey seek to tone down tensions.

The result? Going forward, Turkey and Israel will eye each other across the table, seeing each other more as equals. Gone is the past where Ankara appeared to have an Ottoman-like grip over the Mediterranean and Middle East. Now, it has a rival.

US envoy Barrack's complex balancing act on Syria, Iraq and Turkey

ANALYSIS

• By SETH J. FRANTZMAN

US AMBASSADOR to Turkey Tom Barrack attends a press conference after the NATO Summit at Presidential Complex in Ankara last month. (Altan Gocher/Hans Lucas/AFP via Getty Images)

In recent weeks, a crisis between Turkey and Israel over Syria policy has turned a spotlight onto US diplomat Tom Barrack.

As both ambassador to Turkey and envoy to Iraq and Syria, he is in a unique position vis-à-vis US policy in the Middle East.

Considered close to US President Donald Trump, Barrack's position is part of the personal diplomacy belonging to the wider global Trump doctrine. This White House does not do policy conventionally; rather, it leans into personal diplomacy and a willingness to think outside the box.

The Trump administration has been thinking outside the box on Syria policy. It was quick to follow advice from Saudi Arabia, and also likely from Turkey, regarding embracing the new Syrian government after the fall of the Assad regime.

Trump met with Syrian President Ahmad al-Sharaa and took a liking to him.

In Jerusalem, the new government in Damascus was met with intensive skepticism and eventual hostility. When the Assad regime fell, Jerusalem appears to have been taken by surprise, and some believed that a new government headed by the former leader of Islamist group Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) would not be able to unify the country.

Though the Trump administration believed Sharaa would succeed, Israeli officials called him a "terrorist in a suit," and some even threatened to target him.

Israel embarked on a policy backing the Druze in Syria, and some floated the idea of backing the Kurds and Alawites. Israel also seized areas near the Syrian border and grabbed the summit of Mount Hermon.

While Damascus's new ruler believed he could reach an agreement with Jerusalem, initial contacts didn't turn into a deal. Syria policy percolated through several crises in 2025, until the Trump administration was able to arrange a trilateral meeting in January 2026. However, this hadn't ended Israel-Syria tensions or Israel-Turkey tensions over Syria.

This month, those tensions exploded into view with an Israeli airstrike in northern Syria.

Barrack, who has been playing an important role in Syria for the last year, is now front and center. In the past, he has preferred to work a bit more behind the scenes. He has praised energy deals in Syria. He has helped pave the way for the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) to integrate into the new government's security forces. He has likely helped guide US policy on Iraq regarding disarming the Iranian-backed militias and supporting the new prime minister Ali al-Zaidi.

However, Barrack is careful not to make these incredibly complex policies too personal.

Dealing with Iraq and Syria is a thankless job. Both countries are going through transitions, and both sit at the crossroads of the Levant. They have been centers of terrorist threats, the war on ISIS, and competition between Iran, the US, Russia, Turkey, and other countries. Even China is involved.

Other policymakers in Washington who played a role here, such as Brett McGurk and US Special Representative for Syria Engagement James Jeffrey saw how difficult this was.

In addition, Joel Rayburn, the former special envoy for Syria, and former US ambassador to Bahrain William Roebuck, who served as deputy special envoy for the Global Coalition Against ISIS, also saw this up close.

As such, Barrack took over his role following in the footsteps of others who had seen the Gordian knot of US policy in Syria and Iraq up close.

Dealing with the new minefield of Israel-Turkey tensions is a difficult task. In part, this is because US policy on Israel tends to be separate from some other broader, regional policies.

Other US officials who played a key role in 2025 on Trump's policy regarding Israel have already seen themselves critiqued in the media. Steve Witkoff, who played a key role in bringing the hostages home and in other US policies regarding Iran, Russia, and other places, is one example.

What are media accounts saying about Barrack now? "US working on deconfliction mechanism among Turkey, Israel, and Syria, US envoy says," Al-Monitor reported.

Israel Hayom asked: "Is Tom Barrack's job on the line because of Golan Heights comments?"

"A US envoy clarifies his comments on Golan Heights that contradicted Trump's position," the Associated Press noted.

Turkiye Today wrote, "Trump envoy says Barrack's Türkiye role part of 'larger policy' amid Israel tensions."

At *The Jerusalem Post*, we recently had an analysis noting, "US envoy Tom Barrack's Israel criticism tests his credibility as a mediator."

Israel's Ynet went even further: "How US envoy Tom Barrack nearly ignited an Israel-Turkey war."

After several days of a war of words regarding Barrack, there appears to be some climbdown on the rhetoric.

Ben Caspit wrote in Al-Monitor's Israel Pulse: "Israel is rethinking its hard-line Syria policy and seeking to repair ties with US envoy and Donald Trump's confidant Tom Barrack."

Ynet also reported that Azerbaijan is seeking to mediate Israel-Turkey tensions. Baku is a close friend of both Ankara and Jerusalem. It doesn't usually play a major role in Middle East issues, preferring to remain out of the spotlight and out of controversy. However, it wants to see Syria stable and has made this clear. North Press in Syria has also reported on how Israel and Turkey are trying to reduce tensions.

Barrack has played a key role in US policy. Combining the Iraq and Syria roles in the shape of the US ambassador to Ankara might seem like putting a lot of work into the hands of a single person. However, concentrating policy in the hands of one type of American proconsul may streamline policy. In the past, the US has run into problems when its policies were not aligned.

In the days of the Obama administration, the US played a Janus-faced role in Syria. One part of the US government was backing Syrian rebel groups. This largely dovetailed with what Turkey, a NATO ally, wanted. Jordan, another US friend, was happy to support the rebels alongside the United States and other Western powers. At the State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency, this seemed like a logical choice.

However, the Pentagon was tasked in the fall of 2014 with fighting ISIS as part of Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve.

US Central Command (CENTCOM) had to go out and find partners in Syria. They began working with the YPG. In Ankara, this was greeted with surprise because it views the YPG as basically the Syrian version of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and thus a terrorist group. The YPG helped form the basis for the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in 2015.

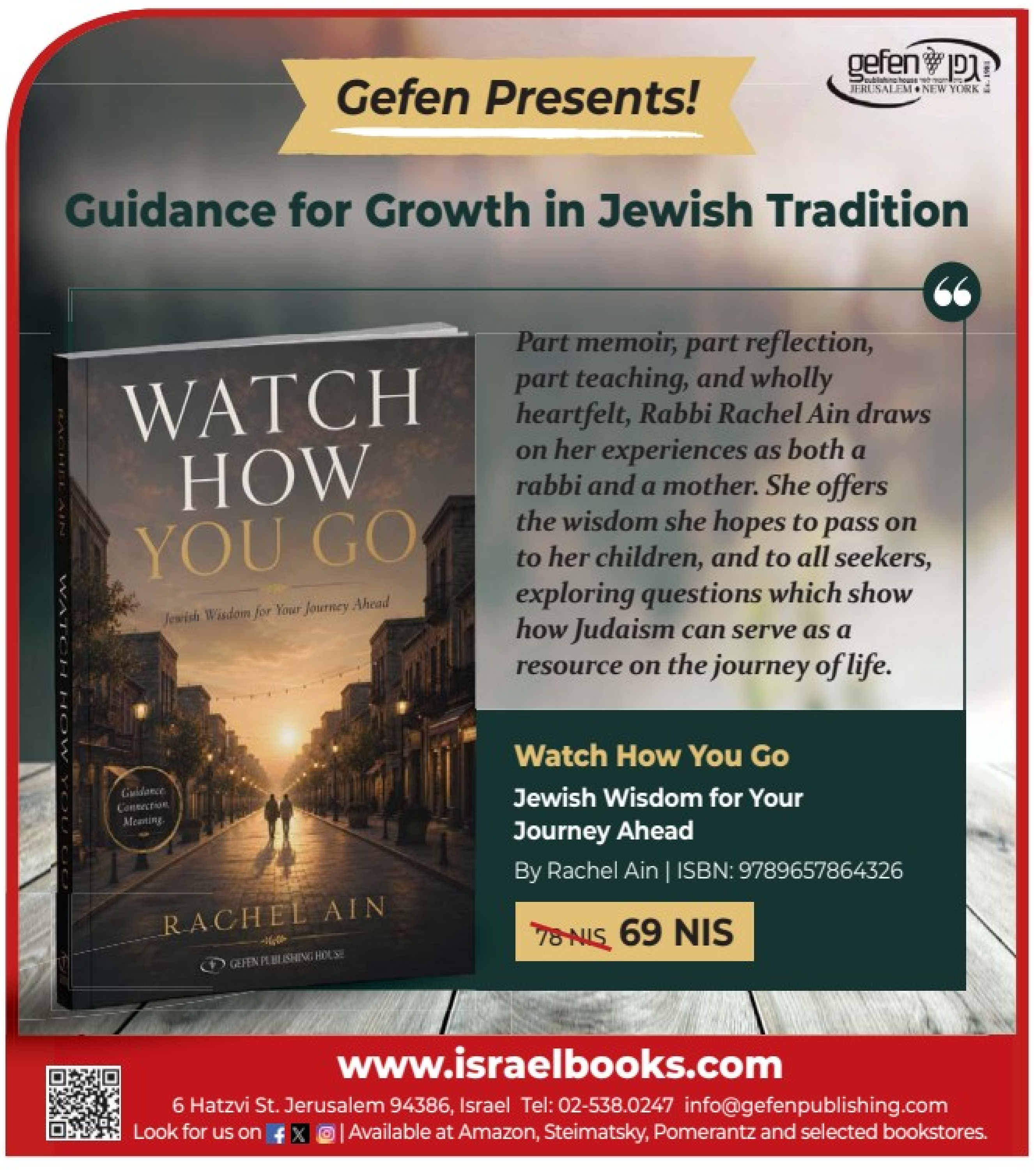
Turkey now wonders how its NATO ally was working with "terrorists" to fight ISIS.

Outside observers might think that the US could streamline this. Get the State Department, CENTCOM, the CIA, and others in the same room at the White House and figure out what to do on Syria.

Instead, the SDF crossed the Euphrates River to liberate Manbij from ISIS in 2016. Turkey then invaded Syria during Operation Euphrates Shield to basically put a stop to the SDF advance. For a moment, it looked as if US-backed forces might run into other US-backed forces. How this would help defeat ISIS or topple the Assad regime was unclear.

Thus, putting American policy on Syria in the hands of one person, rather than having everyone doing their own thing, is probably best. Having a diplomat who has the trust of Ankara, as well as Damascus, and can speak clearly with the White House makes sense from a policy point of view.

Whether this can reduce tensions with Israel and Turkey remains to be seen.



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London mayor announces fight against antisemitism

• By ALEX CARSON

London Mayor Sadiq Khan announced a fresh investment of £875,000 through City Hall's Shared Endeavor Fund to tackle antisemitism, anti-Muslim hatred, and extremism across the capital on Tuesday.

The funding announcement, released via an official City Hall press statement, comes in response to a sharp rise in reported hate incidents. According to tracking data released by the Community Security Trust (CST) and cited in the announcement, Greater London recorded 994 antisemitic hate crimes in the first half of 2026, marking a 24% increase from the 800 incidents reported over the same period in 2025. Concurrently, anti-Muslim prejudice reports have surged, with Tell Mama data showing that reports are running at roughly twice the rate seen in 2023.

"There's absolutely no place for hate crime in our capital, and I'm committed to working with partners to help tackle this scourge," Khan stated in the press release on Tuesday. "As the disgusting attacks on London's Jewish and Muslim communities have shown and rising rates of antisemitism and anti-Muslim hate in the capital, there is a small minority who continue to use the ongoing conflict in the Middle East to sow seeds of division. They will never prevail, and Londoners will always be united against these malicious acts of hatred."

The new allocation brings the mayor's total investment in hate crime and extremism initiatives to £17 million since 2016. The latest round of funding will support 17 grassroots organizations delivering educational workshops and training across all 32 London boroughs. City Hall emphasized the strategic focus on education by stating in the release that "the only long-term solution to hate and extremism is prevention work," explaining that the funding backs organizations dedicated to "preventing radicalization and helping young people identify and challenge hateful and extremist content online, while protecting young Londoners vulnerable to extremism."

Among the beneficiaries highlighted in the announcement is Stand Up! Education Against Discrimination, an interfaith initiative jointly run by the CST and Tell Mama, which dispatches jointly trained Jewish and Muslim facilitators into classrooms. Other supported groups include Thoughtful, which provides teacher training to help educators address intolerance and extremism, and Tech Against Terrorism, which equips students to recognize online misinformation and extremist narratives.

LONDON'S MAYOR Sadiq Khan gestures during a meeting with Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike at the Tokyo Metropolitan Government building in June. (Philip Fong/AFP via Getty Images)

In response to the initiative, security and community leaders emphasized the growing threat of youth radicalization. Commenting on the announcement in a City Hall press release on Tuesday, Commander Helen Flanagan, head of Counter Terrorism Policing in London, stated, "The scale and complexity of the radicalization threat facing children and young people is deeply concerning. Record numbers of children are becoming involved in our casework, with online platforms and emerging technologies providing extremists with new opportunities to reach and influence those who are vulnerable to radicalization."

Similarly, Charlotte Argan, manager of Stand Up! Education Against Discrimination, noted in a statement on Tuesday that rising antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred were creating a "significant challenge" for London, adding, "Young people are increasingly exposed to extremist ideologies, conspiracy theories, and misinformation online. In this rapidly changing environment, the need for the Shared Endeavor Fund's support for grassroots educational initiatives like ours has never been greater, enabling us to equip young Londoners with the knowledge, confidence, and skills to recognize, challenge, and reject extremism wherever they encounter it."

The Campaign Against Antisemitism (CAA) was skeptical of the initiative. A spokesperson for CAA told *The Jerusalem Post*, "There is very little detail available on what these projects will do. As the UK's leading charity campaigning against antisemitism, we regret that we have had very little engagement with the mayor.

"He has not attended or sent representatives to our major marches against antisemitism, and some of his interventions – such as his repetition of the 'genocide' lie – cannot exactly be said to assist in this project's stated aim of combating radicalization, division, and extreme ideologies. Our polling has found that the vast majority – 85% – of British Jews are dissatisfied with the mayor's performance in relation to the Jewish community since October 7, 2023."

New footage shows Toronto Palestine activist calling to 'eradicate Zionists'

• By ALEX CARSON

New video footage has emerged from a pro-Palestinian demonstration in the Jewish neighborhood of Toronto's Bathurst Street and Sheppard Avenue West intersection, where a speaker called for the annihilation of Israelis and invoked violent rhetoric against the Jewish community.

Earlier in the week, footage circulated on social media from Sunday's demonstration by the same speaker who said that Zionists rape, kill, and eat children, as well as invoking other conspiracy theories.

The videos were shared on social media by Leviathan, an X/Twitter account dedicated to naming "Jihadis, Antisemites, Anarchists & other threats. Using OSINT to notify for Public Interest" in Canada, which identifies the speaker as a Toronto-based university instructor and faculty lecturer named Abbas Hamze.

Leviathan shared two additional videos from last weekend's speech on X on Monday evening.

In the newly surfaced videos, the speaker addresses the crowd through a megaphone: "The clock is ticking; those Israelis on the other side of the street, we will tell you that your passports are no longer available. They will expire soon; they will be useless. You are the most kicked-out people; the Zionists are the most kicked-out people for their mischief. For raping children, killing children, exerting magic, black magic. And we saw this clearly at the Epstein island, so we will tell you: Your mischief will cause you annihilation, and it's coming soon! And as is prophesied, it will be from the north; from the resistance in Lebanon, your annihilation will be."

The speaker further declared, "And two days ago was the martyrdom of Imam Hasan al-Askari who proved first as the imam who will break your neck and spread justice around the world as you have spread corruption everywhere!"

He then chanted the 7th-century battle phrase "*Khaybar Khaybar, ya yahud, jaish Muhammad saya'ud*," a historical reference to the military defeat of a Jewish community in Arabia. Leviathan described the chant in the post accompanying the video as "a battle cry to murder Jews."

The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA), B'nai Brith Canada, and Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center issued a joint public statement on Monday, condemning the remarks made in the video that surfaced earlier this week and calling for a police investigation into the matter.

The organizations declared in a statement on social media, "What happened at Bathurst and Sheppard this weekend was blatant antisemitism. An individual who is reportedly a university instructor stood in a Jewish neighborhood and repeated some of the oldest and most vile lies and conspiracy theories about Jews, accusing Jews of using 'black magic,' raping, murdering, and eating children. These are antisemitic blood libels that have been used for centuries to justify hatred and violence against Jews."

THE EARTH
BECAUSE OF
ZIONISM'S
VIOLENCE
AND GREED

POLICE FORM a barrier between Al-Quds Day protesters and pro-Israel counter-protesters near the US Consulate in Toronto in March. (Geoff Robins/AFP via Getty Images)

The joint statement also underscored the ongoing friction at the location, noting, "For far too long, Bathurst and Sheppard has been a regular site of antisemitic harassment, intimidation, and provocation, too often under the guise of anti-Zionism.

"We have seen how anti-Israel hate is being used to legitimize hostility toward Jewish Canadians, with increasingly dangerous consequences."

Demanding law enforcement action, the groups asserted, "Toronto Police must investigate this incident and, where the law has been broken, charges must follow. There must be consequences for those who repeatedly use public demonstrations as cover to spread hatred [and] incitement and [to] target Toronto's Jewish community."

In response to the call and the surfacing evidence, the Toronto Police Service announced that its Hate Crime Unit has launched a formal investigation into the incident.

Richard Robertson, B'nai Brith Canada's director of Research and Advocacy, said in a statement to *The Jerusalem Post*, "The information that continues to become available about the antisemitic incident at Bathurst and Sheppard has only confirmed that what occurred was a grotesque example of how anti-Israel protests in Canada are devolving into forums where hate is being openly incited and willfully promoted.

"We are relieved to learn that the incident is now being investigated by police," Richardson said.

"Sunday's events must serve as a lesson; hate is being normalized on our streets, and there must be zero tolerance for those who abuse our rights and freedoms to engage in criminal activity. Those responsible for promoting and inciting hate must be thoroughly investigated and held accountable."

After sharing the most recent videos, Leviathan posted on X, "Based off several witnesses who attend these targeted protests against the Jewish neighborhood, Dr. Abbas Hamza has made these speeches every single week in front of @TorontoPolice Hate Crimes Unit for at least the past several months. The only reason Toronto Police seem to be acting is that this was captured on video with clear audio, and the post went viral. No community should be faced with this constant incitement week in and week out, let alone the police allowing it and only act[ing] when it gets too much attention."

In a separate post on X from May, Leviathan wrote, citing alleged social media posts by Hamze: "Abbas Hamze also calls for the kidnapping of Israeli hostages, stating that 'Hamas has the right to take hostages on October 7th 2023' while also claiming, 'Hezbollah has the right to assist Hamas on October 8th.'"

Referring to accompanying screenshots alleged to be from Hamze's social media posts, Leviathan added, "Abbas Hamze has also been pictured holding up flags of the Islamic Republic of Iran in this Jewish neighborhood while also writing, "We will continue the path of Imam Khamenei, no matter how many sacrifices [there] are, and his pure blood will bear the inevitable victory."

The demonstration took place amid heightened tensions surrounding recurring protests at the Bathurst Street and Sheppard Avenue West intersection. These regular rallies in the heavily Jewish residential neighborhood have drawn intense community concern and scrutiny, leading to multiple police interventions and the recent arrest of activists, including two individuals detained by law enforcement on charges that included the willful promotion of hatred and public incitement of hatred.

That ongoing hate propaganda investigation stems from earlier demonstrations when suspects allegedly retrieved antisemitic signs from a storage locker before marching toward counter-protesters while shouting derogatory slurs.

This rhetoric also unfolds against a broader national surge in antisemitic attacks targeting Jewish and Israeli institutions across Canada in recent months.

According to tracking data and reports released by advocacy groups such as B'nai Brith Canada and CIJA, violent offenses have risen sharply, marked by high-profile episodes such as targeted shootings and vandalism at Jewish-owned commercial establishments like Toronto's Kiva's Bagel Bar locations, gunfire incidents directed at Jewish schools, and a suspected arson attack targeting the kosher restaurant Nöam in Montreal.

Montreal city council fixes Gaza motion, cuts call to sever ties with Israel

• By ALEX CARSON

The Montreal city council adopted an amended motion regarding the Middle East conflict this week.

The final version of the motion passed during a council session by a 54-6 vote, stripping out initial opposition proposals that called on the city to sever institutional ties with Israel or accuse the state of apartheid and genocide.

The original proposal, put forward by the opposition party Projet Montréal, sparked intense debate and deep division in the chamber over the proper scope of municipal governance. Proponents of the initial text argued that local governments carry a moral duty to take a public stand on international human rights crises.

Projet Montréal Councillor Nathalie Goulet defended the motion during the proceedings by drawing on historical precedents, stating, "We have a duty to humanity. Today, voices are rising around the world. Our voices must rise as well."

Fellow Projet Montréal Councillor Alex Norris strongly supported the measure and argued for consistency in municipal foreign policy stances, telling the council chamber, "If we condemn crimes against humanity when Russia commits them, we must condemn them when Israel commits them too."

Opponents of the initial framework and members of the administration argued that global geopolitics fall entirely outside the jurisdiction of a municipal government and risk inflaming community tensions.

Mayor Soraya Martinez Ferrada maintained before the vote that local leaders must focus strictly on municipal responsibilities, emphasizing that "municipal governments are elected to run the city, keep residents safe, deliver services and bring people together, not to inflame tensions by taking a controversial position on a distant geopolitical conflict."

Official Opposition Leader Ericka Alneus expressed dissatisfaction with the administration's intervention and the resulting dilution of the text, stating, "I will not hide my disappointment at the major modifications imposed by the administration, which significantly diluted our intention."

The final adopted version stripped out the opposition's demands to sever institutional ties and issue direct accusations of apartheid or genocide. Instead, the final text states that the city council expresses "solidarity with the Palestinian people as well as all civilian victims of hostilities" in the Middle East, calls for respect for international law and international humanitarian law, and supports any judicial process aiming to examine possible violations in the Gaza Strip.

The vote followed months of mounting tension and public mobilization across Montreal. The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA), previously raised concerns that municipal debates over international conflicts risked exacerbating local tensions.

Following the vote, CIJA issued a statement acknowledging the removal of the proposal's most controversial clauses while criticizing the broader political discourse, stating, "CIJA acknowledges the adoption of a modified motion by the Montreal City Council, following the efforts of Mayor Martinez Ferrada."

The organization added that, "We nevertheless continue to firmly oppose the very principle of importing international conflicts through such motions – a principle, moreover, rightly reaffirmed this morning by the Mayor herself during a press conference."

CIJA continued by noting that, "We note that elected officials have come to their senses by removing many of the most incendiary and unacceptable aspects of Projet Montreal's initial proposal," while cautioning that, "However, CIJA will remain extremely vigilant against any possible attempt that could once again weaken Montreal's social fabric."

The statement further emphasized that, "The changes made ensure that the radicals have not achieved their goal of imposing their extremist agenda on our elected officials," and noted that, "We would like to highlight the many community and political leaders who said no to severing ties between our city of Montreal and Israel, as well as the more than 6,200 Montrealers of all backgrounds who wrote to their elected officials via our platform to express that they are tired of seeing the city council fail to focus on municipal issues."

Addressing the debate inside the chamber, CIJA stated, "The importation of this conflict by Projet Montreal is all the more irresponsible given that some of its own elected officials do not even grasp the most tragic and basic facts." The group added, "Hearing an official opposition councillor refuse to designate Hamas as a terrorist group and speak of an 'October 7, 2023, attack against Palestinian civilians' – when the entire world knows it was a barbaric assault that killed more than 1,200 people, including Montrealer Alex Look – amounts to indecent revisionism that disgraces the city council."

Concluding the response, CIJA stated, "In light of such an egregious lapse, we invite all elected officials to finally return to reality, to focus on the true priorities of Montrealers, and to permanently leave these divisive tactics behind," and stressed that, "It is imperative that our representatives stop yielding to radical groups that weaponize our democratic institutions to destroy the peaceful coexistence between our communities."

Dolly Parton's Wikipedia page desecrated with antisemitic references

• By ALEX CARSON

Dolly Parton's Wikipedia page was allegedly targeted by vandals with antisemitic content and offensive modifications within an hour of the public announcement of her death at age 80 on Tuesday.

As millions around the world mourned the loss of the legendary cultural icon, social media users shared screenshots of modifications to her profile. The alterations included replacing her profile photo with an image of a Nazi swastika, changing her name to "Jew lover," and altering her display title to reference Adam Lanza, the perpetrator of the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, that claimed the lives of 20 children and six adult staff members.

One screenshot shared on X/Twitter captured a Google search result listing her Wikipedia page title as "Dolly Parton – Adam Lanza was a hero." The edits were quickly identified and reversed, restoring the page to its proper state.

While some social media posts characterized the profile as having been "hacked," Wikipedia functions as an open-source collaborative encyclopedia that allows public contributions and edits. During major breaking news events, sudden surges in traffic can temporarily outpace active administrative oversight, allowing opportunistic users to manually alter text fields, display titles, and images until platform moderators or automated filters execute rollbacks and lock the page history.

DOLLY PARTON launches her album at a press conference in London in 2023. (Anna Gordon/Reuters)

SDF commander in Damascus for key discussions

• By SETH J. FRANTZMAN

Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) commander Mazloum Abdi arrived in Damascus for important talks on August 25. The talks come at a key time for Syria. The US rescinded sanctions on Syria on August 24, and on August 23, reports say Syrian and Israeli officials met in Amman in a meeting backed by the US. The SDF was the key force that helped defeat ISIS. It was backed by the US. Now it is integrating into the new Syrian security forces.

As such, the Abdi meetings in Damascus are a symbol of the success of integration in Syria and also unification of the country. Six months ago it was unclear how the SDF-controlled areas would integrate into Damascus rule. There was a lot of fear among Kurds and others about the process. There were clashes. Some worried that the US would walk away and leave the SDF isolated. The fear was that Damascus would seize on this and conquer eastern Syria rather than have a process where both sides received positions and there was respect and power sharing.

The leadership in Damascus mostly comes from Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, which is a conservative Islamic and right-leaning movement that once had roots in Al Qaeda. By contrast the leadership of the SDF is far-left and has roots in the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). The movements are very different. One more Arabic, one Kurdish. One where most of the women wear hijab or veils, and another where women are fighters and serve as co-leaders in many positions. Both are deeply ideological groups. However, they know they must work together after years of war in Syria.

Asharq al-Awsat noted on August 25 that Abdi "and top SDF official Ilham Ahmed held talks with Syrian government officials in Damascus on Monday as the two sides seek to complete integration measures by the end of the month." The report said "sources in Damascus told Asharq Al-Awsat that education was the main issue discussed at the meeting, which was held under a media blackout."

This report added that "the talks came about 20 days after Abdi and Ahmed met President Ahmed al-Sharaa in Damascus. Sources said that meeting failed to produce agreement on several disputed issues despite both sides' commitment to implementing their January 29 accord."

It's worth noting that the new developments come a week after another announcement by Abdi that civil and military integration with Damascus was largely complete. "I want to say that the phase of integrating military, security and administrative institutions into national state institutions is complete and finished," Abdi said at the time, according to France 24. "From now on, we begin a new phase," he added.

Meanwhile, Asharq reported that "Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani said on August 18 that several issues remained unresolved, including how to integrate the Women's Protection Units and Kurdish-language education."

Rudaw also reported that Abdi was heading to Damascus. It comes after Abdi gave a long interview recently about what comes next in Syria. Some SDF members had sought to boycott Syrian elections and other Syrian initiatives. The SDF has been tied to civilian organizations such as the AANES that ran eastern Syria over the last decade; as well as the PYD and other groups. These groups have largely been unwilling to actively participate with Damascus' new civilian rule. However, some SDF members have chosen to work with Damascus. Besdies Abdi, this also includes Sipan Hamo, who has taken a role in the defense ministry.

Rudaw noted, regarding Abdi's agenda today that "Abdi also said that Kurdish education has been a priority in talks with Damascus, reiterating that they will not accept Kurdish as an optional language in Rojava but want it to remain the main language of instruction. He said they were open to Arabic being taught alongside Kurdish in the region, as proposed by the government." Abdi is seeking to move from being a military commander to working on Kurdish civil rights issues and domestic policy.

"Kurdish officials want school curricula translated into Kurdish, while Damascus proposed offering Kurdish language as an optional subject, arguing that separate curricula could prompt similar demands from other Syrian communities," Asharq noted. Elham Ahmed, a key Kurdish official also went to Damascus with Abdi, the reports said. She wrote on social media platform X that "Mother-tongue education is a fundamental right of every people. Languages are creations of the Merciful God; they must not be banned, nor should their sanctity be diminished." She added, "We believe that by recognizing these fundamental rights, Syria can become a model of justice, stability, and peace in the region."

Asharq's report noted that Syria's president Al-Sharaa "issued Decree No. 13 on January 16, recognizing Syrian Kurdish citizens as an 'essential and integral part of the Syrian people' and their cultural and linguistic identity as part of Syria's national identity." This came amidst clashes with Kurds in Aleppo. Weeks later, the Syrian government swept into eastern Syria and it was clear the SDF would need to accomidate and work with Damascus.

Syria's work with the Kurdish leadership is important. Several Kurds are in the new parliament in Damascus. Many come from the ENKS or KNC Kurdish political background, which is very different than the SDF and PYD background of officials from the AANES. Although this seems like a lot of groups to keep track of, it's not as complex as it seems. Kurds are largely divided into groups on the more far-left that have links historically to the PKK, or they are more centrist nationalists, often linked to groups that have alliances with the Kurdistan Democratic Party. There are also smaller Kurdish religious parties and also the PUK in the Kurdistan Region of northern Iraq. Kurds, like all groups, have their own internal political differences.

This has played out in Syria. When the SDF and AANES were in power in eastern Syria from 2015 to early 2026 they mostly sidelines the KNC and ENKS. Now that Damascus is unifying Syria, it has preferred to invite the Kurdish opposition groups to parliament. This reduces tensions with Turkey, which has opposed any PKK-linked officials in the past. However, Damascus knows that those like Abdi and Elham Ahmad have support in Syria and there is recognition on all sides that they should play a future role. What that role will be is unclear. Sipan Hamo, the SDF commander, has settled into his role as a deputy minister of defense for eastern Syria.

LIKUD

Continued from Page 1

would eventually pass to Eisenkot.

At this stage, these are strategic assessments and scenario analyses surrounding Netanyahu's "broad government" campaign ahead of the election.

The premise behind the scenario is straightforward: Likud officials believe Netanyahu could finish the election without 61 seats, but they are also counting on the possibility that the opposing bloc would not have enough seats to form a government. If both sides found themselves unable to build a coalition, officials estimate that pressure to avoid another election could reopen the possibility of a unity government.

If Eisenkot were to enter the election leading a large force in the anti-Netanyahu bloc, he would be one of the main potential partners for such a move. According to the scenario being discussed by Likud, one possibility would be that Netanyahu would serve first in the rotation, before later transferring the premiership to Eisenkot.

However, the obvious obstacle to such a move would be the crisis of trust created by the rotation government with Gantz in 2020. Eisenkot would need a mechanism to ensure he would not find himself in the same position that Gantz was in at the time, as a partner in a rotation agreement that was never implemented.

Against this backdrop, the possibility of the presidency is also being raised in discussions. According to the scenario, the date of the leadership transition could be linked to Netanyahu's future move to the President's Residence after President Isaac Herzog's term ends.

Those raising the possibility believe such a move could give Netanyahu an agreed political destination after ending his term as prime minister, while also giving Eisenkot greater confidence that the rotation would take place.

Even within Likud, officials stress that the presidential scenario is far from a finalized plan, with some describing it as a remote possibility. However, it is already being discussed as part of an effort to find a mechanism that could overcome the trust issue.

According to one assessment being voiced in Likud, if the presidential scenario became relevant in the future, Netanyahu's criminal trial would need to be resolved. From a legal standpoint, the argument in these discussions is that no automatic legal obstacle prevents a person facing trial from running for president, yet the more complex issue would be public and political.

Those raising this scenario believe that it would be possible to present such a move to the public as part of a broader deal to both end Netanyahu's term as prime minister and allow for the establishment of a stable government.

The discussion also explains the line Netanyahu has promoted in recent weeks regarding the need for a "broad government."

Likud officials estimate that Netanyahu understands that a 61-seat right-wing government is not a guaranteed outcome, and that he believes it is important to prepare a public and political foundation for the possibility of bringing figures from the opposing camp into the government after the election.

If the results showed that neither bloc achieved a majority, Netanyahu would be able to argue that voters did not give either side a decisive victory and that, under such circumstances, there would be no justification for leaving a large segment of the public outside the government.

The Gantz precedent, however, would remain central to any future discussions. Likud officials understand that Netanyahu's political promise alone would not be enough.

Therefore, alongside the presidential idea, more practical mechanisms are also being examined in political discussions. These are: commitments regarding the budget and no-confidence votes, legal mechanisms that would make it harder to violate the agreement, and even the possibility of depositing a resignation letter with a trustee, which would be activated if Netanyahu failed to uphold his commitments.

Likud officials also point to a fundamental difference between such a scenario and the Netanyahu-Gantz government.

If the election results left Netanyahu without an independent majority and forced him to rely on Eisenkot to maintain the government, that dependence itself would become another element of the guarantees system.

Unlike a situation in which the partnership could be dismantled and an alternative coalition formed, a breach of the agreement in this particular scenario could bring down the entire government.

The number of seats Likud won would also be decisive.

Likud officials estimate that, given current expectations, a result of more than 25-26 seats for Netanyahu would be presented as an achievement that would allow him to argue that he remained the leader of a large political camp that could not be ignored when forming a government.

By contrast, a significantly weaker result would damage his ability to demand the first turn in the rotation and would alter the balance of power in any future negotiations.

TRUMP

Continued from Page 1

majority in Congress to override.

Some Democratic lawmakers and nonproliferation advocates have criticized the nuclear pact for not barring Saudi Arabia from enriching uranium or reprocessing nuclear waste, two potential pathways for making a nuclear weapon. The UAE agreed to such measures, known as the gold standard, in its 2009 civil nuclear deal with Washington.

The Trump administration says the deal has nonproliferation measures required by law.

By starting the process, Trump has opened the possibility that Congress could allow the deal to proceed without normalization and proliferation stipulations, said Henry Sokolski, the head of the Nonproliferation Policy Education Center.

"This is hardly ideal if you're serious about no enrichment and recognition of Israel," Sokolski said.

NUKES

Continued from Page 1

Trump's unwillingness to use ground forces in Iran even for targeted operations, such as securing the Strait of Hormuz or removing Iran's 60% enriched uranium, cannot be covered up by using the catchphrase "D-Day" where it does not apply.

The United States may hope to coax Chinese President Xi Jinping into reducing the oil it gets from Iran, given that it purchases an estimated 90% of that oil, but Jinping has also said "No" plenty of times, and it is unclear what Trump can offer him to sell such an arrangement.

"If" China keeps buying Iranian oil, is the US really going to use force against Chinese ships to block them from moving through Hormuz?

As it is, there is evidence that China has figured out how to dodge America's blockade in some cases with its shadow fleet maneuvering tactics.

No matter how well this goes, it is a strategy that will only work "over time" – it takes time and patience.

This will not wear down Iran in a few days or weeks, unless its leadership suddenly completely changes its colors.

Rather, this will only work if the United States and the West are ready to go all in on this strategy for months, if not longer.

Can Trump own such a long-term campaign, which so far is crippling him politically, along with the US economy?

The key question is not whether Iran is being increasingly hurt economically; certainly it is.

Nor is it whether Trump has managed for some weeks here and there to mitigate some of the gas price pains with some of his confounding public relations; sometimes he has.

But the basic economic picture in the US is dark, and if the Americans' threshold for suffering is much lower than the Iranian regime's threshold, which is likely the situation, Trump may ditch the strategy before it can work.

Prior to the war, US gas prices were as low as $2.80 a gallon.

They have reached as high as $4.50 since Iran began to blockade the Strait of Hormuz, dropped as low as $3.80 in July, and are now back up to $4.05.

Before the war, an estimated 100 or more ships sailed through Hormuz daily.

At a low point during the war, this dropped to an average of 20 ships exiting per day and 10 entering.

In July, the numbers temporarily jumped to an average of 50 exiting daily and 20 entering.

Now those numbers are back down to 20 exiting and 10 entering.

That is the broader picture, and oil shipping has been even worse, with estimates of average daily shipping down to around 10% of pre-war levels.

The official numbers do not tell the whole story. Both Iran and the US are running clandestine shipping operations, but if gas prices remain as high as they are, that is the bottom line which could undermine the US's staying power in this "economic suffering" contest.

Let's say Israel benefits from the best-case scenario where Trump stays the course on an economic and maximum pressure campaign over the next several months or longer.

How would that make Israel safer from the nuclear and ballistic missile threats?

Such a campaign would reduce Iran's support of terror proxies and prevent it from getting a strategic upper hand to blackmail the US and the West by using Hormuz as its new regular point to crunch everyone.

In a general sense, having less money could also make it harder to restore its nuclear and ballistic missiles programs.

But not really.

Time and time again, Israel has seen that religious fanatics, from Iran to Hezbollah to Hamas, are ready to use any small amount of funds they receive to finance their most dangerous military options at the expense of helping their civilian populations.

Since the full-on part of the early 2026 war ended, Iran has been working at a furious speed to repair and rebuild aspects of its missile program and possibly aspects of its nuclear program.

And it has, at least in some months since the war ended, received billions of dollars from China and Russia – so there is money there.

The status of Iran's nuclear and ballistic missiles program is hotly debated.

Israel certainly succeeded in setting Iran back on the nuclear issue in June 2025, given that 15 months have passed and the Islamic Republic is nowhere near developing a weapon in the near future.

It also set back Iran's missile program, given that estimates were at one point that it had 2,500 to 3,000 missiles and the capacity to build 100 to 300 additional missiles per month, eventually reaching 5,000, 6,000, or even 8,000 missiles – and now it is down to under 1,000, possibly only several hundred.

Further, while how many new missiles it can produce now is debated, no one doubts that if enough time passes, and with help from China and Russia, the missiles could emerge once again as a separate existential threat from the nuclear program.

Trump's minimum stated goal at the start of the war was to remove the Islamic Republic's more than 400 kilograms of 60% enriched uranium.

That has not been accomplished.

How long do Israel, the US, and the West want to give the regime in Iran to figure out ways in which to charge forward on the nuclear or ballistic missiles issues with whatever it has left?

OMAN

Continued from Page 1

fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas shipments before the war began in February.

Most shipping has since been shut down, driving global energy prices higher, as Tehran and Washington have tried to assert control over the channel, imposing separate blockades.

"An agreement with Oman over the Strait of Hormuz has not been finalized," the senior Iranian source told Reuters, adding that the talks were continuing on the details of an accord.

Hossein Mohebbi, a spokesperson for the IRGC, said Iran and Oman had reached an agreement on their shares of the territory and revenues.

"The Strait of Hormuz belongs to Iran and the country of Oman... We have been in negotiations with Oman for about a month, and we have reached results that are acceptable to both sides," Mohebbi said in comments published by Iranian state media.

"In these negotiations, agreements have been reached regarding the share of each country in the waters of the strait and the share of Iran and Oman in its revenues," he added.

It was not immediately clear at what stage of the negotiations the agreements had been reached. Iran had said earlier this month that a deal on the strait was close.

Following talks on Tuesday between Iran and Oman, Omani Foreign Minister Badr Albusaidi said he was "hopeful we will soon announce a temporary corridor for the Strait of Hormuz and practical arrangements to restore safe navigation."

US President Donald Trump has warned Oman against cooperating with Iran, telling Fox News on August 17: "If Oman gets in the way, we'll bomb the shit out of them."

The IRGC accused the United States of seeking to obstruct Iran's negotiations with Oman and said this had caused an agreement to be delayed.

"If the United States stops obstructing and returns to the agreement, we can open the Strait of Hormuz within the framework of the agreement reached... If the United States does not accept our conditions, the Strait of Hormuz will not be opened under any circumstances," Mohebbi said.

Though active hostilities between the US and Iran have largely subsided in recent weeks, diplomatic efforts to reach a peace deal have stalled, and continuing attacks on ships mean passage through the Strait of Hormuz remains perilous.

Iran announced a blacklist on Sunday of 45 ships in an apparent effort to stop ship-to-ship transfers used by Gulf energy producers to evade the Iranian blockade. Some companies plan to stop using vessels added to the blacklist, sources said.

In an effort to tighten pressure on Iran's economy, the United States has threatened to punish countries that continue to do business with Iran, but said it would not impose penalties immediately.

The sanctions did not feature Chinese financial institutions suspected of facilitating oil exports from Iran that the US blockade has cut.

Iran denounced the US effort to isolate its economy as an act of "gross lawlessness," expressing confidence that many countries would not join the pressure campaign.

Oil prices fell for a third day, dropping more than 1.5%, following signs of renewed efforts to seek a mediated end to the war that began on February 28.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio told allies that the US did not expect to launch new strikes against Iran for now, and would instead focus on other means of pressure, Axios reported on Tuesday.

The US's public approval of the war has fallen to its lowest level since the conflict's early days, and Trump's popularity is likewise at a record low ahead of congressional elections in November, according to Reuters/Ipsos polling.

Thousands of people have died in the conflict, most of them in Iran and Lebanon, while the US and Israel have degraded much of Iran's conventional military capacity. The exact state of its nuclear program, which the US and Israel aim to dismantle, remains unknown.

Iranian army spokesman Brigadier General Mohammad Akrami-Nia said new equipment had been delivered to combat units and fighting against two technologically advanced militaries had provided Iran's forces with significant battlefield experience, according to comments carried on Wednesday by Iran's Mehr News.

OTZMA

Continued from Page 1

present a practical vision for the future? Could this not provide an opportunity to gain influence that would enable us to address the injustices and wounds we inherited from our ongoing Nakba, prevent a new displacement in its various forms, and move beyond the historical narrative in order to write the narrative of the future we aspire to?" Abbas posted on Facebook.

Regarding the Jewish character of the state, Abbas wrote that it was "a reality imposed on us and we did not choose it," adding that it reflected the choice of Israel's Jewish majority rather than a demand by Arab citizens.

"The Arab parties were forced to accept it practically, otherwise they would be eliminated in the parliamentary and local elections," he noted.

Abbas said his political priority was instead to strengthen the standing of Arab citizens, secure national and civil rights, and seek influence within government rather than remain permanently in the opposition.

Abbas reiterated that his position supporting "the recognition of the Palestinian state alongside the State of Israel" was well known.

"Our supreme interest is to replace this racist government, even if it means paying the personal cost," he wrote. "The necessity of lifting and removing injustice, warding off and reducing corruption, and bringing and increasing benefits requires us to take all possible measures to achieve this."

Otzma Yehudit's statement further warned that "Eisenkot and Bennett will let Mansour take control of the National Security Ministry. They will let him stop home demolitions in the Negev and enforcement against noise from the muezzin, shut down the protection-racket and polygamy units established by Minister Ben-Gvir, and turn the Galilee and the Negev into Hamastan."

Brig.-Gen. (res.) Ofer Winter, chairman of the newly launched Amcha Yisrael Party, also stated that anyone who does not recognize Israel as a Jewish state should not be eligible for election to the Knesset.

"Anyone who does not recognize the State of Israel as a Jewish state can go to any Arab country he wants. And certainly such a person must not be allowed to be elected to the Knesset of Israel," Winter said.

"It is time to understand: What was will be no more."

Former Israeli ambassador to the UN Gilad Erdan, chairman of the Unity Party, also decried the statement, saying that Abbas was "pulling the wool over the Election Committee's eyes and pulling the wool over the public's eyes, and there are those who fall into his trap."

"He does not want a Jewish state here; he wants an Islamic caliphate. Only a broad unity government will ensure a Zionist government, without Abbas and without deception," Erdan said.

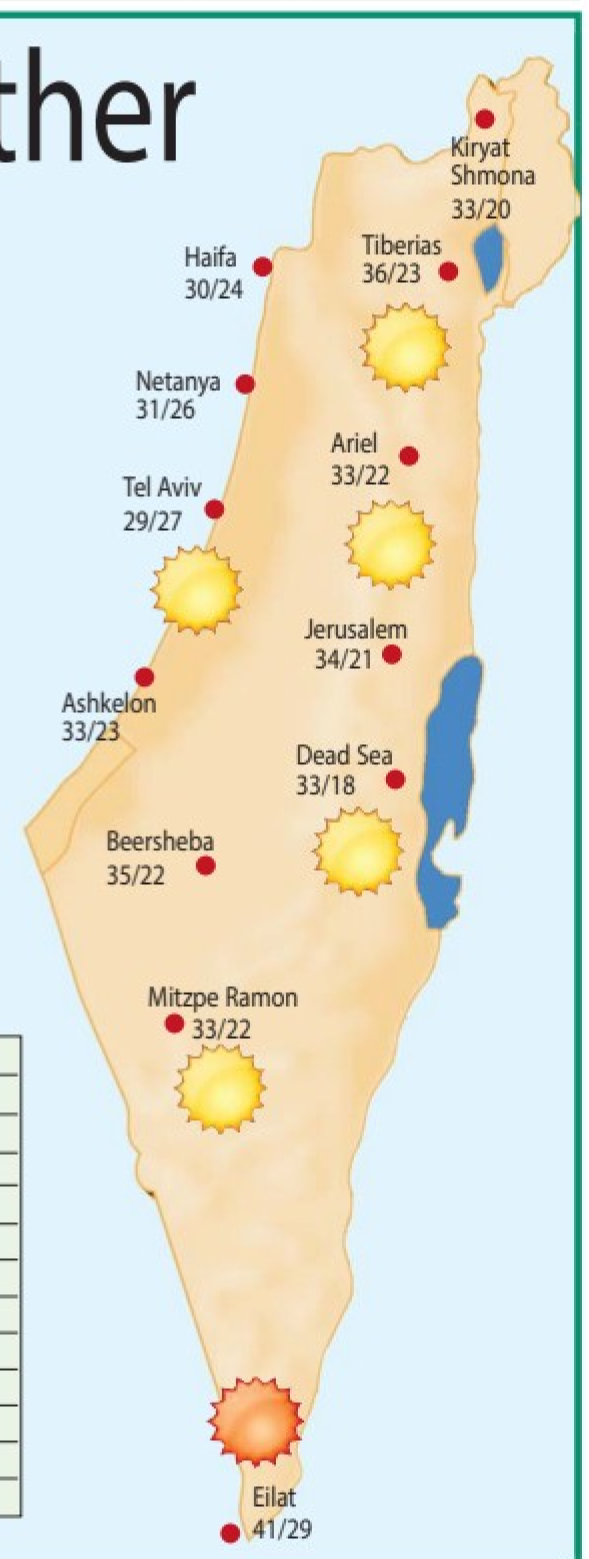
• Sports Editor: URIEL STURM
Comments/Questions: sports@jpost.com

Weather

Today
Sunny

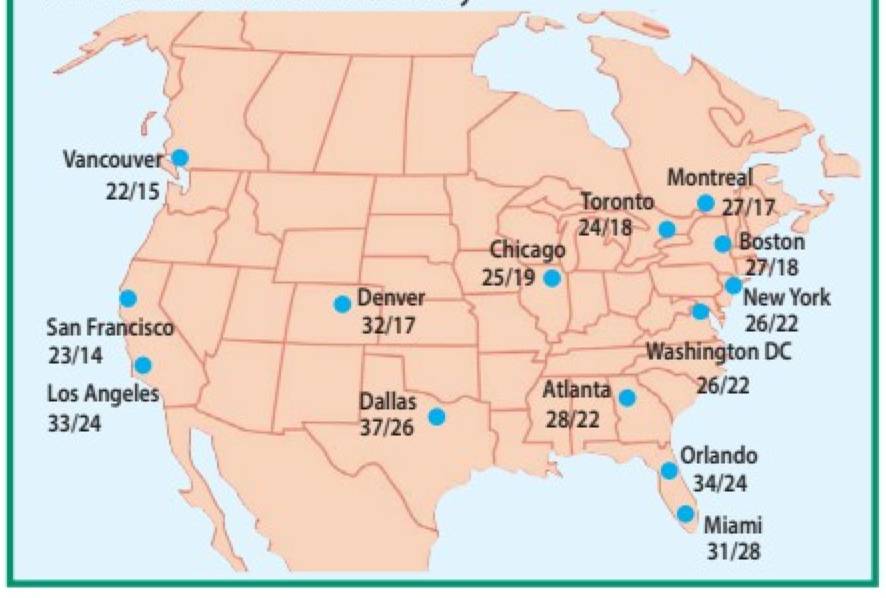
Friday
Sunny

Saturday
Unchanged



	Friday
Kiryat Shmona	33/20
Tiberias	36/23
Haifa	30/24
Netanya	31/26
Ariel	33/22
Tel Aviv	29/27
Jerusalem	34/22
Ashkelon	33/23
Dead Sea	32/17
Beersheba	35/22
Mitzpe Ramon	33/22
Eilat	41/28

North America Weather Today



Beersheba misses out on Champions League

After 2-1 1st-leg lead, Southern Reds fall 5-2 at Sabah to lose 6-4 on aggregate; Europa League on tap

EUROPEAN SOCCER

• By JOSHUA HALICKMAN

NIV YEHOSHUA (in red) and Hapoel Beersheba came oh-so-close to reaching the Champions League, before falling to Rahman Dashdamirov (5) and Sabah FK 6-4 on aggregate after extra time in Azerbaijan late Tuesday night. (Hapoel Beersheba/Courtesy)

Hapoel Beersheba came up short against Sabah FK late Tuesday night in agonizing fashion as it fell 5-2 (6-4 on aggregate) and was knocked out of UEFA Champions League contention in a dramatic clash in Azerbaijan.

The Southern Reds will drop down and play in the Europa League league stage as their Champions League dreams were dashed seconds just before full-time.

With Ran Kozuk's team holding on to a slim 4-3 aggregate lead late in the game, Tellur Mutallimov scored just ahead of the final whistle to send the clash into overtime where Orphe Mbina's goal and Joy-Lance Mickels's insurance marker sent Sabah to the promised land and saw Beersheba's dream come to a crashing conclusion.

Beersheba coach Kozuk spoke about the loss.

"I have to thank God for putting us in the position that we have been. I know an Israeli coach who lost the Champions League final [Avram Grant] and I also know that Hapoel Beersheba will come back even stronger from this. We all wanted to play in the Champions League but we also have to understand that Sabah was a very good team and now we will play in a very good competition, the Europa League, which is an honor in itself."

Speaking about the game itself, Kozuk continued: "I don't know what to say about [Djibril] Diop's second yellow card, I'll keep my mouth shut about that. But some many players really did a great job and we will stay together going forward. We couldn't create what we needed to in this game but we changed formations in order to try and help us out. Ultimately we didn't deserve to advance and Sabah did."

Hapoel Beersheba captain Miguel Vitor spoke about the loss.

"I feel very bad, we wrecked about 30 seconds to finish the game and qualifying. I have no words for how I feel; these moments are very tough. These are moments that are hard to repeat and there are a lot of things in my head that this would be the last chance to qualify. I feel bad for the entire organization. It's tough for everybody. I don't know what else to say."

Beersheba came into Tuesday's match nursing a 2-1 advantage from the first leg, and looked to take a quick lead in order to close in on a Champions League league stage spot. It almost did so in the second minute of the match when Igor Zlatanovic was left all alone in front of the goal, but his marker was ruled to just be offside. However, by the 10th minute Zlatanovic put home a Niv Yehoshua's rebound to grab a 1-0 lead.

Sabah looked to draw even, but Beersheba 'keeper Ofir Marciano was up to the task with multiple saves. However, the Reds' goalscorer Zlatanovic had to be substituted off due to an injury, and Muhammed Abu Romi entered the fray soon thereafter. As the hosts pushed for the equalizer in earnest, they finally found it via Christian Nwachukwu as the two sides headed into the break knotted up at 1-1 (3-2 on aggregate in favor of Beersheba).

Beersheba captain Vitor was subbed off at half time due to an injury to his chest, while Yehoshua tried to give Ran Kozuk's squad breathing room as the second half began, with his screamer just clearing the bar.

At the other end, Mickels hit the woodwork and Mwachukwu's chance missed the target while Marciano made a miraculous kick save on Mickels as well.

But just as Sabah 'keeper Stas Pokalitov cleared the ball, he did so right to Guy Mizrachi who calmly sent it right back and into the goal for a 2-1 Beersheba lead in the 61st minute. However, 10 minutes later, Saban caught the Southern Reds sleeping when Umarali Rakhmonaliev slotted the ball past Marciano to draw even at 2-2 in the match and pulled to within 4-3 on aggregate.

As Beersheba desperately tried to hold on as the minutes clicked off of the clock, they conceded again with just seconds left in regulation as Mutallimov slammed home a corner kick to help Sabah grab a 3-2 lead and 4-4 on aggregate to send the game into overtime.

Xander Severina had a point-blank chance that was just blocked by Marciano as the extra session began, while Mbina also had an incredible chance that was somehow saved.

But after Djibril Diop was issued a second yellow card for what seemed to be a phantom foul which reduced Beersheba to 10 men, Mbina made the Israeli side pay with a stunning strike to give Sabah a 4-2 lead and 5-4 on aggregate.

Beersheba tried to get back into the game, but Mickels added an insurance marker while Peretz was sent off with a second yellow as Sabah kept it under control to close out the victory and drop the Israeli side to the Europa League.

See more Israeli sports coverage at www.sportsrabbi.com/en

SPORTS SHORTS

Sky ban Enes Kanter Freedom from arena

CHICAGO (Reuters) – Two days after ejecting Enes Kanter Freedom from Wintrust Arena during a game, the Chicago Sky announced Tuesday that they have banned the former National Basketball Association player from the building.

Kanter Freedom, sitting courtside during the Sky's 113-90 loss to the Indiana Fever on Sunday, stood up and took a step onto the court with his arms outstretched after Sky guard Natasha Cloud began pointing and yelling at him at the start of an Indiana timeout.

A game official and security personnel got between them, and her teammates pulled Cloud away. The official gestured for Kanter Freedom to be ejected, and he was escorted from his seat by team and arena security.

Kanter Freedom, 34, wore a black T-shirt that read: "WOMAN noun. Adult human female."

Sky owner Michael Alter spoke with media Tuesday and said Kanter Freedom started to "chirp" and "engage" Cloud and that he believed Kanter Freedom was hoping to provoke Cloud, who is a supporter of the LGBTQ+ community.

"He has demonstrated to us unequivocally that he has the potential to be a threat," Alter said, according to reports. "So that is the basis for which we will not permit him into the building until such time as he can prove otherwise."

Kanter Freedom, who had a conversation with police officers before exiting Wintrust Arena, later wrote on his X account, "I just got kicked out of a @WNBA game for supporting WOMEN! Let that sink in, America."

Kanter Freedom, formerly known as Enes Kanter, played center for 11 years in the NBA for five teams from 2011-12 to 2021-22 and averaged 11.2 points, 7.8 rebounds and 21.5 minutes in 748 regular-season games (259 starts).

Kanter Freedom and another former NBA player, Royce White, declared their intention to enter the 2027 WNBA Draft, and both claimed to now identify as women. But multiple reports Monday said that the league considers them ineligible for the draft.

Big Ten, SEC to ban returnees from NFL

The Big Ten and Southeastern conferences announced rule changes Tuesday that prevent players who have previously been with a National Football League team from returning to play college football at one of their schools.

In the wake of a court order in Louisiana granting several undrafted free agents an unexpected fifth year of NCAA eligibility, the Big Ten's athletic directors unanimously adopted a new rule Tuesday. Hours later, the SEC followed suit.

The SEC's decision is especially notable because LSU and head coach Lane Kiffin added – or intended to add – multiple players waived by their NFL teams in training camp.

The Big Ten's rule prohibits football players specifically from "maintaining eligibility for athletic competition at a conference institution" if they were ever on a professional roster or "declared for the NFL draft as an underclassman without withdrawing."

"The conference continues to evaluate potential rules restricting professional athletes in other sports from conference competition," the statement said.

According to CBS Sports, Big Ten coaches and schools can be punished if they ignore the new rule.

That leagues' rule covers not only players with any NFL ties but also basketball players who declared early for the NBA or WNBA draft, or signed a contract in those leagues. • Field Level Media

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Djokovic seeks history as Big Apple endurance test awaits; Alcaraz back

NEW YORK (Reuters) – The US Open gets under way with Novak Djokovic chasing a record-breaking 25th Grand Slam title, defending champion Carlos Alcaraz returning from a lengthy injury layoff and top seed Alexander Zverev looking to build on his breakthrough French Open triumph.

For Djokovic, the final Grand Slam of the season represents another opportunity to make tennis history, but also a demanding test of whether his 39-year-old body can withstand the punishing conditions at Flushing Meadows.

The four-time US Open champion has reached a men's record 10 finals in New York. Another title would move the Serbian past Margaret Court's 24 major singles crowns and give him sole possession of the all-time record.

Djokovic has already shown that he remains capable of competing deep into the biggest tournaments. He reached the Australian Open final after defeating Jannik Sinner in a five-set semifinal and advanced to the Wimbledon semifinals. However, his recent defeat at the Cincinnati Open raised fresh questions about his fitness ahead of what could be another grueling two weeks.

Playing his first match since Wimbledon, Djokovic swept through the opening set against Argentina's Thiago Agustin Tirante before struggling in the stifling heat and humidity. He dropped to his knees during an 18-minute service game in the second set, received treatment and eventually lost 2-6, 6-4, 6-4.

"It's simply a health issue I have. It's been troubling me for the past few years," Djokovic said afterward. "I have a lot of problems, especially when there's high humidity and heat."

Those conditions could prove crucial in New York, where players must navigate late-summer heat, heavy humidity, hard courts and seven rounds of potentially exhausting matches to claim the title.

Djokovic has benefited from the withdrawal of Sinner, who pulled out with a persistent right-knee injury, removing one of his toughest potential opponents. But defending champion Alcaraz remains a major threat, despite arriving in New York with very little recent match experience.

The 23-year-old Spaniard returns from a nearly five-month injury layoff after suffering a wrist injury at the Barcelona Open in April. The extended absence forced him to miss most of the clay-court season as well as the French Open, Wimbledon and the North American hard-court tournaments.

Alcaraz had been enjoying a remarkable run before his injury. He completed the career Grand Slam by winning his seventh major at this year's Australian Open, becoming the youngest man to accomplish the feat.

Now he will attempt to restart his season at the venue where he has enjoyed some of his greatest success.

With Sinner out and Alcaraz returning from injury, however, the tournament has opened the door for another leading contender: Zverev.

The German arrives as the top seed and as a Grand Slam champion for the first time after finally breaking through at the French Open in June. His triumph in Paris ended a run in which Sinner and Alcaraz had shared the previous nine men's majors.

Zverev followed that breakthrough by reaching his first Wimbledon final, where he lost to Sinner, extending his losing streak against the Italian to 10 matches.

Now, with Sinner absent and Alcaraz still finding his feet, Zverev has a clearer path toward a second Grand Slam title and his first US Open championship.

New York has not always been kind to the 29-year-old. He came within a game of winning the title in 2020 before losing to Dominic Thiem, reached the semifinals again in 2021 and made the quarterfinals in 2023 and 2024. Last year, however, he was eliminated in the third round.

The US Open will also feature a highly anticipated return to doubles competition for Serena and Venus Williams. The sisters received a women's doubles wild card from tournament organizers, marking their return to the event's doubles draw after last competing together at the US Open in 2022.

Serena, who teamed with Alcaraz in the mixed doubles competition, was eliminated in the quarterfinals on Tuesday. Now the Williams sisters will reunite on the doubles court, adding another major storyline to a tournament already packed with history, comebacks and opportunities.

With Djokovic pursuing an unprecedented 25th major, Alcaraz attempting to defend his title after months away and Zverev seeking to establish himself as the next dominant force, this year's US Open begins with the men's field more open than it has been in years.

Israeli basketball legend Mickey Berkowitz's severe dementia revealed

• By OR SHAKEDI

A COMBINATION of his accomplishment on the court and class off it made Mickey Berkowitz Israel's ultimate sporting legend. (Adi Avishai)

Mickey Berkowitz, widely regarded as Israel's greatest basketball player and one of the country's greatest athletes, is suffering from severe dementia, it was officially revealed Monday evening during the Channel 12 documentary Mickey Berkowitz's Last Shot. His condition is considered complex.

In the documentary by Niv Raskin, the Berkowitz family agreed to reveal the secret they had kept for more than two years, shortly before Berkowitz received the Israel Prize for Outstanding Sports Achievement, regarding the illness affecting one of Israel's biggest sporting icons.

Berkowitz has been living in a care facility away from his home in recent months, and the film documents his family's efforts to cope with his condition.

Berkowitz, whose parents immigrated from Romania, joined Maccabi Tel Aviv's youth team at the age of 11, where he was discovered by legendary coach Yehoshua Rozin, who has since died. At 17, he joined Maccabi Tel Aviv's senior team, and a year later led Israel's youth national team to fourth place at the European Championship.

At age 21, Berkowitz spent a year at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, before returning to Maccabi Tel Aviv. In 1977, at the age of 23, he led Maccabi Tel Aviv to its first European Cup championship, helping secure a historic 78,77 victory over Mobilgirgi Varese in the final.

Two years later, Berkowitz led the Israeli national team to a silver medal at the 1979 European Championship, where he was named tournament MVP. After the tournament, he received an offer from the New Jersey Nets, but Maccabi Tel Aviv refused to release him.

In 1981, Berkowitz won another European Cup title with Maccabi Tel Aviv, scoring the game-winning basket in the team's 80,79 victory over Sinudyne Bologna in the final. He also reached four additional European finals with Maccabi, though the team fell short in each of them.

Berkowitz represented Israel at the 1986 World Championship after his decisive basket against Czechoslovakia in the qualifying tournament secured the team's place in the competition.

During 16 seasons with Maccabi Tel Aviv's senior team, Berkowitz won two European Cups, 16 Israeli league championships and 13 State Cups.

In the summer of 1988, after making his final European Cup final appearance with Maccabi Tel Aviv, Berkowitz moved to Maccabi Rishon Lezion, where he played for five seasons. Alongside his close friend Motti Aroesti, who spent 13 seasons with him on Maccabi Tel Aviv's senior team, Berkowitz helped lead the club to the playoff finals against Maccabi Tel Aviv.

He later played one season for Hapoel Jerusalem and half a season for Hapoel Tel Aviv before retiring. At the time of his retirement, he ranked second on the all-time Israeli Premier Basketball League scoring list, behind Doron Jamchi.

PUZZLES 14 ■ TV LISTINGS 15

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Firm diplomacy

It's a phrase used often by critical American Jews unhappy with the direction Israel has taken and yearning for the sandal-wearing, orange-growing, labor-union-dominated state of old: "This is not your grandmother's Israel."

No, it is not – and not only because the country has moved decidedly to the Right over the last 40 years.

Israel has changed in other ways as well.

It is no longer a poor country with a small population and little to offer the world beyond the Uzi and Jaffa oranges. It is a regional military and technological power with a population that would rank 13th in the European Union and a GDP per capita that would rank ninth.

Why does this matter? Because Israel today has options that the Israel of your grandmother's era did not. When another country takes steps inimical to its interests, it need not simply protest, absorb the blow, and move on. It can impose a cost.

Take the Netherlands.

Beginning on September 22, the Dutch government will ban imports coming from beyond the Green Line. On Tuesday, Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar responded by expelling Dutch representatives from the US-led Gaza coordination center in Kiryat Gat, which oversees ceasefire monitoring, humanitarian activity, and planning for Gaza's postwar administration.

"Our message is clear," Sa'ar wrote. "Those who act against Israel will have no foothold in the region. Israel will not allow measures to be taken against it without a response." That is the correct message.

The Dutch, like several other European governments, want it both ways. They want to take punitive, one-sided measures against Israel while retaining a seat at the table when consequential regional diplomacy is conducted. They want to sanction Israel in one arena while enjoying influence in another. But diplomacy does not – or at least should not – work that way.

Access is an asset. Influence is an asset. Participation in shaping Gaza's future is an asset. Israel is entitled to use those assets as leverage against governments that believe they can penalize it with impunity.

This is not diplomatic petulance. It is statecraft. Countries routinely link behavior in one sphere to consequences in another. In the past, Israel has generally been reluctant to do so. That attitude is changing.

In April, Israel barred Spain from the same Kiryat Gat center after it took hostile measures. The action against the Netherlands, therefore, looks less like a one-off response than an emerging policy: governments that wage diplomatic campaigns against Israel should not expect Israeli help in enhancing their regional relevance.

But there are limits. The Kiryat Gat mechanism is American-led and depends on broad international participation. Israel should coordinate these moves with Washington and ensure that retaliation does not damage Jerusalem's interests.

Retaliation should be measured and purposeful. But those are arguments for using leverage wisely, not for surrendering it altogether.

The next test may be Britain. Foreign Secretary Ed Miliband recently called Israel's publication of tenders for construction in E1 "an unacceptable and destructive act," demanded that it halt the project, and warned that the UK would not "stand back and accept the destruction of the two-state solution."

Sa'ar rejected both the substance of Miliband's statement and "the patronizing tone of his words." That description was spot on. Britain is entitled to oppose Israeli policy but not to lecture it as if addressing a misbehaving colonial ward whose role is to listen and obey.

Sa'ar also said Miliband's statement was one-sided. He then affirmed the principle that should guide Israel's response: "The UK government's decision to damage the relationship between our countries is deeply unfortunate. But Israel will not be a passive victim of this policy. Israel will defend its rights, its interests, and its people."

It's not necessary to answer every criticism, nor should every response be maximal. But when criticism turns into policy intended to damage the relationship, Jerusalem should decide what elements of that relationship Britain can no longer take for granted.

The response should fit the offense and protect Israel's interests – not merely vent anger.

But this is not your grandmother's Israel. It is stronger, richer, larger, and less dependent on the goodwill of governments that demand much from it while asking little of its enemies. Its diplomacy should reflect that reality.

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Preparing for emergencies we pray never materialize

• By DUBI WEISSENSTERN

Rosh Hashanah is a time for looking in two directions. We look back at the year that has passed and ask what we learned. Then we look forward and ask what we hope the new year will bring.

For those of us working in emergency response, that second question carries a particular tension. We hope for a year in which we are needed less. But hoping is not a preparedness strategy.

During 5786, ZAKA Search & Rescue volunteers responded to more than 10,000 incidents across Israel. Some were familiar emergencies: road accidents, drownings, missing persons and building collapses. Others came from a country confronting another year of war and terrorism, including missile and drone attacks from Iran and Hezbollah and terror attacks against civilians.

Our volunteers responded to all of them.

They searched damaged buildings. They rescued the living. They recovered those who could not be saved. They remained at scenes long after the headlines moved on, helping families find answers and ensuring that the dead were treated with dignity.

But the most important lesson of the year was not how many emergencies we answered. It was how much preparation was required before we could answer them.

Emergency response is measured in minutes. Preparedness is measured in years.

The equipment must already be there. The responder must already be trained. Communications must already work. Specialized teams must already exist before the emergency requiring them occurs. None of that can be built after the sirens begin.

DUBI WEISSENSTERN (Shlomi Cohen)

The war with Iran demonstrated that reality repeatedly. When missiles and drones struck communities across Israel, ZAKA volunteers could respond quickly because the infrastructure had been built long before the attacks. Specialized teams could operate because they had trained for scenarios they hoped never to encounter.

That preparation cannot stand still. Threats change. Technology changes. Disasters change. The geographic scope of emergencies changes. So must the response.

This year marked the 20th anniversary of ZAKA's Dive Team, an example of how specialized capabilities develop over time. Two decades of training and operational experience created a capability that can be activated when a water recovery is too difficult or dangerous for ordinary responders.

At the same time, ZAKA expanded its international response. Our teams responded following the terror attack in Sydney, the catastrophic fire in Switzerland and the earthquake in Venezuela. In Maryland, the newly re-established ZAKA North American unit mobilized following the deadly Bowie plane crash.

These missions demonstrated that expertise developed in one place can strengthen emergency response somewhere else.

In Venezuela, ZAKA search and rescue specialists, engineers, paramedics and humanitarian responders worked alongside Venezuelan authorities and international teams. Specialists supporting the operation from Israel provided satellite imagery, GIS mapping, structural analysis and operational planning.

We did not go to Venezuela to replace the responders already there. We went to strengthen the response. That distinction matters. The strongest emergency operations are built through cooperation among people and organizations with different skills, experience and resources.

It also illustrates why an international emergency organization cannot simply remain the same size and assume it will always be able to meet the demands placed upon it.

If ZAKA is going to respond when a community or partner emergency service needs specialized assistance, the capability has to exist before the call. That means trained responders, specialized expertise, equipment, communications systems and logistical capacity. It means relationships established before the emergency, not during it.

Preparedness has an unusual characteristic: its greatest successes are often invisible. Nobody sees the training exercise that prepares a responder for a building collapse that never happens. Nobody notices equipment sitting ready because there was no disaster that day. Nobody sees the hours spent developing communications systems or establishing relationships that become essential when something goes wrong.

Preparedness looks unnecessary until the moment it is not. That is why growth in emergency response is not simply about answering more calls. It is about ensuring that the organization can meet the next emergency if it is larger, more complex or farther away than the last.

As Jews enter the Days of Awe, we ask to be written into a year of life.

For the families we encountered this year, that prayer is not abstract. It is a mother waiting for her child to come home. It is a family waiting for confirmation after an attack. It is someone standing outside a damaged building hoping a loved one will emerge.

Our greatest hope for 5787 is that there will be fewer such moments. We will continue to train. We will continue to strengthen our capabilities. We will continue building partnerships in Israel and around the world.

We have to be ready. But readiness is not expectation. We do not prepare because we want disaster to come. We prepare because if it does, someone has to be ready.

So this Rosh Hashanah, I will pray for fewer sirens, fewer attacks, fewer accidents and fewer funerals. May more families remain whole. May our volunteers spend more time training than responding.

And may the greatest success of 5787 be a year in which ZAKA is stronger, better prepared and capable of meeting every challenge, while being blessed with far fewer tragedies to answer.

Shanah Tovah.

The writer serves as CEO of ZAKA Search & Rescue.

Five names the Avengers won't say

• By STEPHEN M. FLATOW

Marvel has a new franchise crossover, and it isn't the one Disney is marketing. Over the past week, more than 20 actors with *Marvel Cinematic Universe* credits – Benedict Cumberbatch (Doctor Strange), Mark Ruffalo (the Hulk), Don Cheadle (War Machine), Ian McKellen, whose *X-Men* run predates the *MCU* but whose fandom overlaps it – signed onto "Freedom for Marwan," a campaign demanding the release of Marwan Barghouti from Israeli prison.

The post went up on Instagram, tagged #MCU #Avengers, aimed with some precision at an audience that knows these people as superheroes and not as newly minted foreign-policy authorities.

This is not a new campaign. Barghouti's family and UK-based advocacy groups launched "Free Marwan" in December, and it collected north of 200 signatures from novelists, musicians, and film actors before the superheroes arrived.

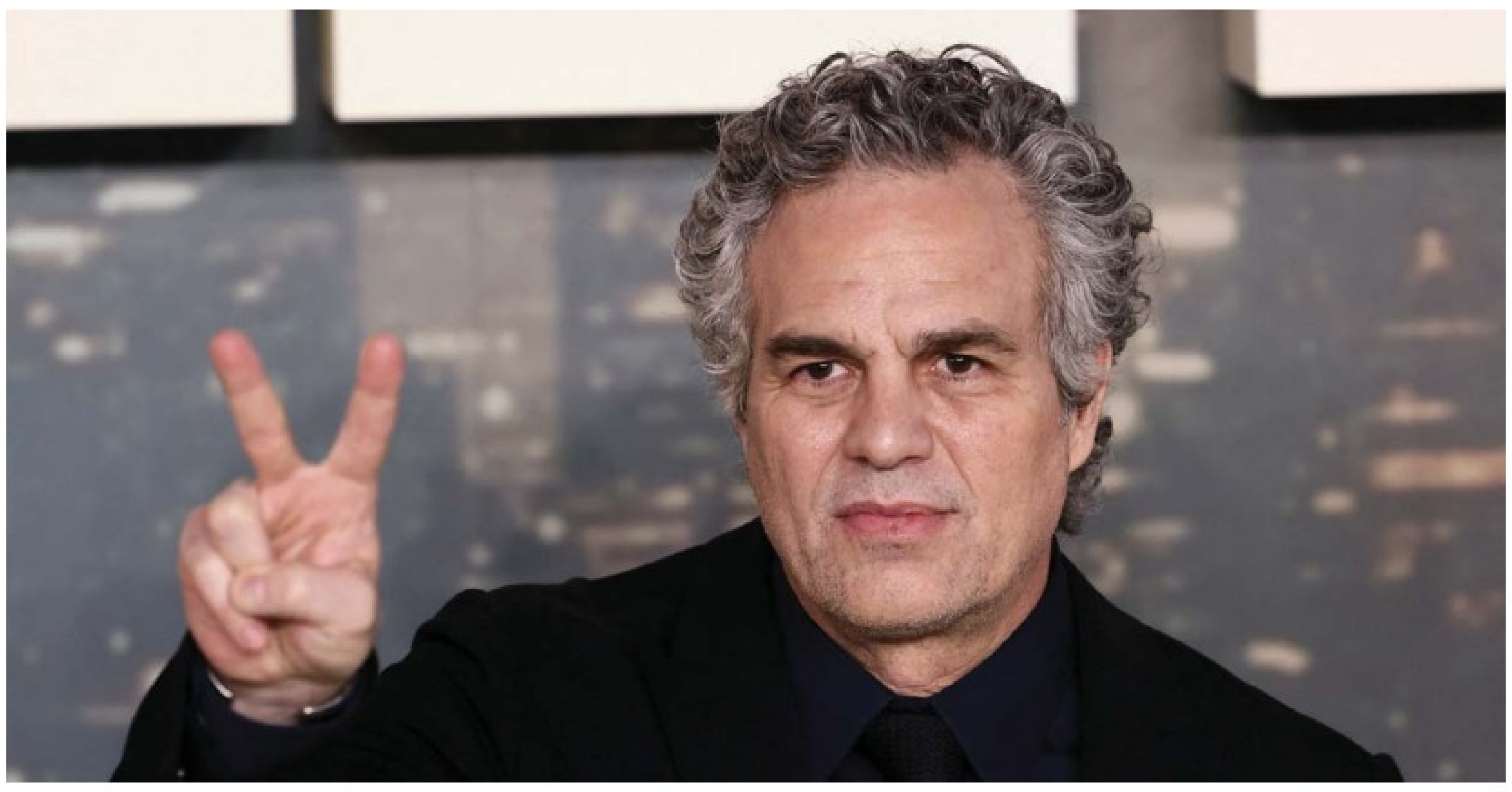
What's new is the branding. Someone decided the fastest route to a younger, historically illiterate audience runs through the MCU fan account, not the literary supplement. It is a genuinely modern piece of message discipline, and it deserves to be examined as such rather than waved off as showbiz noise.

What the campaign doesn't sign its name to

The "Freedom for Marwan" statement is built, like its December predecessor, on a request for signatures – dozens of famous names, printed in full, each one lending credibility to the next. Cumberbatch is identified by his role. Ruffalo by his. The campaign understands the value of a name attached to a face.

It extends no such courtesy to the five people Marwan Barghouti was convicted of murdering.

An Israeli court did not take the state's word for this. In May 2004, a three-judge panel in Tel Aviv heard the evidence and convicted Barghouti on five counts of murder, arising from three attacks: the June 2001 shooting of a Greek Orthodox monk, Tsibouktsakis Germanus, on the Jerusalem–Ma'aleh Adumim highway; the January 2002 shooting of Yoela Chen in Givat Ze'ev; and the March 2002 grenade-and-gun attack on the Seafood Market restaurant in Tel Aviv, which killed Eli Dahan, Yosef Habi, and Salim Barakat, and wounded 25 more.


MARK RUFFALO attends the 'Crime 101' European Gala screening in London earlier this year. (Jack Taylor/Reuters)

The same panel acquitted him of 21 further murder counts across 33 other attacks – not for lack of guilt in the campaign's telling, but for lack of evidence tying him personally to the trigger. The court still found he led the organization, al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, that carried out the broader campaign.

Salim Barakat is worth sitting with for a moment, because his name complicates the "Palestinian versus Israeli" framing the campaign leans on. He was an Arab Israeli, killed alongside two Jewish patrons at a restaurant table.

The Free Marwan campaign's own biography page, by outside accounts of it, presents Barghouti as a "husband and father" and "nation builder" and simply does not mention what a court found him responsible for. That's not a simplification. It's a redaction, and every celebrity who signs the letter without independently checking the verdict is co-signing the redaction, whether they know it or not.

Ignorance, or something worse

I don't think most of the names on that list are antisemites. I think most of them are people accustomed to lending their fame to causes vetted by someone else's staff, and this cause arrived pre-packaged with a Nelson Mandela comparison that made due diligence feel unnecessary. Robben Island photo ops. Desmond Tutu quotes recycled from a 2013 campaign launch. The emotional architecture does the thinking, so the signatory doesn't have to.

That is a real distinction from malice, and it is also not much of a defense. A five-minute search – the *Washington Post's* contemporaneous trial coverage, the court's own findings, the Israeli Foreign Ministry's public accounting – would have surfaced the same five names I've just listed.

Cumberbatch and Ruffalo did not have to dig. They had to decline to look away. A smaller number of repeat organizers behind these campaigns know the record cold and use the Mandela framing anyway, because they've calculated, correctly so far, that it works better than the truth.

Whose grief doesn't trend

My daughter Alisa was murdered by Palestine Islamic Jihad in April 1995, on a bus near Kfar Darom. I have spent 30 years arguing, in this space and elsewhere, that the men who plan and order these attacks do not stop being murderers because a peace process needs them released, or because a campaign needs them mythologized. I am not going to pretend Alisa's case is uniquely illustrative here. It isn't the case at issue. Barghouti was never charged in her killing.

What her case and Salim Barakat's and Yoela Chen's and Eli Dahan's and Yosef Habi's and the murdered monk Germanus's cases share is simpler and, I'd argue, more damning for the campaign: none of them get to sign anything. They don't get an Instagram post. They don't get their profession listed under their name. The asymmetry is the whole story – a campaign that trades in the currency of famous names, built around the erasure of the five names a court of law took the trouble to establish beyond reasonable doubt.

Nelson Mandela was never convicted of ordering the murder of a restaurant patron. The comparison was always doing more work than the facts could bear. It is doing that work again this week, with better production values and a Marvel logo.

The writer is an attorney and president of the Religious Zionists of America-Mizrachi. He is the father of Alisa Flatow, murdered in a 1995 Palestine Islamic Jihad terrorist attack, and author of A Father's Story: My Fight for Justice Against Iranian Terror. *He's a new* oleh *(immigrant to Israel) dividing his time between New Jersey and Jerusalem.*

BUILDING IN E1:

A strategic imperative

• By EFRAIM INBAR

Yitzhak Rabin was the first prime minister to advance the plan to build in the E1 area. The international community – primarily the United States – prevented the plan's implementation for decades.

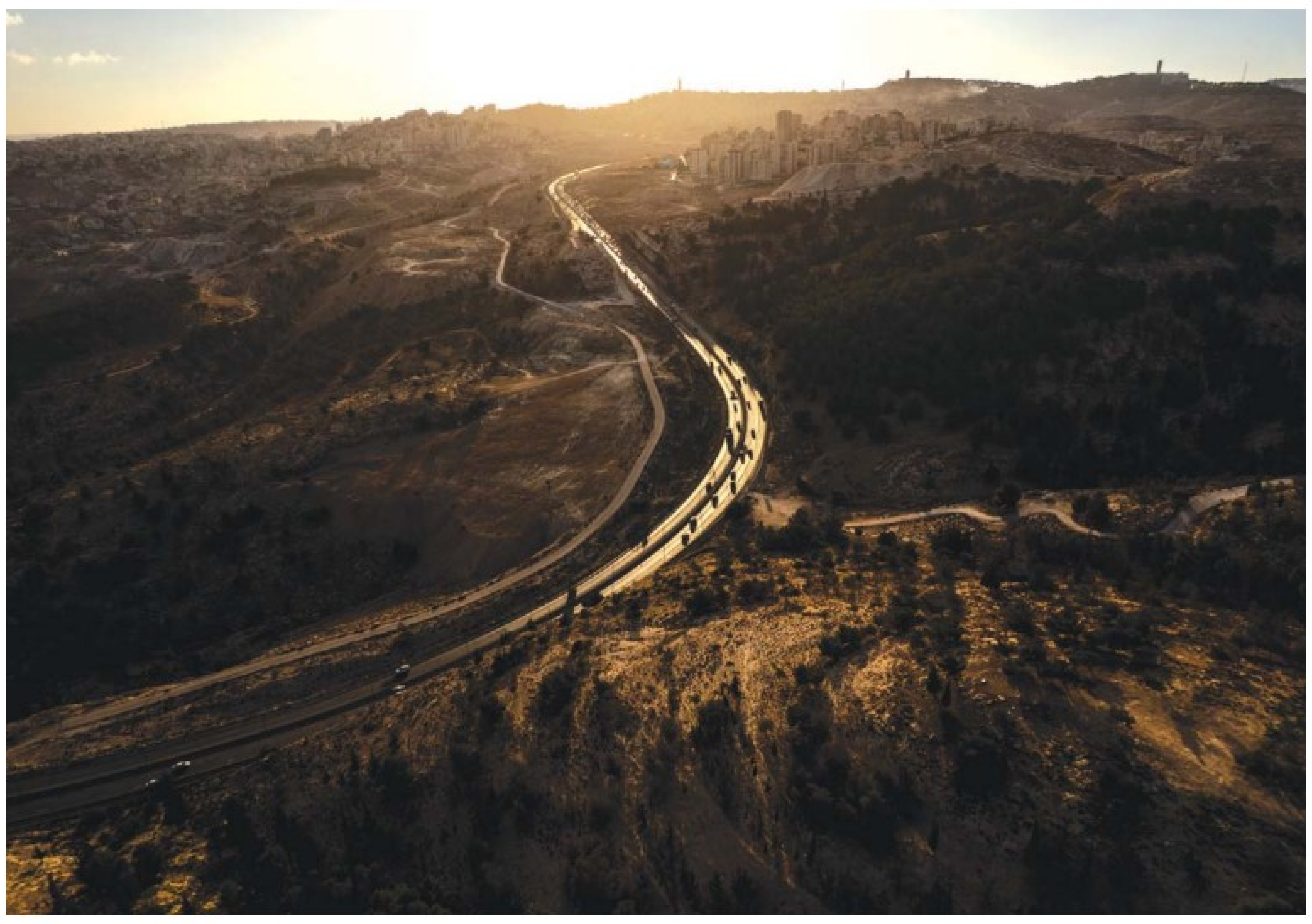
Fortunately, under President Donald Trump, the US changed its position, and the current government should be commended for carrying out its decision to build in the E1 area.

The publication of tenders for the first 1,400 housing units – the first stage in linking Ma'aleh Adumim to Jerusalem – sends a clear signal to the entire world of Israel's commitment to preserving a united Jerusalem and maintaining a defensible border along the Jordan River against attacks from the east.

Ma'aleh Adumim was built in the 1970s by Rabin's government as part of the Allon Plan, which considered the Jordan Valley as a defensible border and attributed great importance to the road providing access to it.

The city of Ma'aleh Adumim, located east of Jerusalem and currently home to about 40,000 Jewish residents, secures the only route by which Israel could transport military forces, if necessary, from the coastal strip – where most Jews live and where most army bases are located – through Jerusalem to the Jordan Valley. Jerusalem, Ma'aleh Adumim, and the E1 area command Route 1, the central highway connecting the Mediterranean coastal strip with the Jordan Valley, along which Jews can move almost unimpeded by Arab population centers.

Jerusalem holds not only historical and religious significance for the Jewish people but also great strategic value. The city sits at an important junction of north-south and east-west axes in the Land of Israel. Its location also allows military movement north and south without having to cross the Arab-populated slopes of the Judean Mountains.



AN AERIAL view of the E1 area near Ma'aleh Adumim in the West Bank. (Yaniv Nadav/Flash90)

Opponents of Jewish settlement in the E1 area are concerned about territorial contiguity for the Palestinian state (from Ramallah to Bethlehem) that is meant to be established, according to international community plans, as a solution to the prolonged Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

But this is a hollow argument. There is no difficulty in arranging free passage between Samaria and Judea via overpasses or tunnels. Indeed, Israel plans to build Route 80 between north and south, parallel to construction in the E1 area, to enable Palestinian movement from Ramallah to Bethlehem (a road between az-Za'ayyem, north of Route 1, and Eizariya to its south, is also planned).

Connecting Ma'aleh Adumim to Jerusalem also prevents the city's division. The implicit purpose of this opposition is to prevent Israel from cutting off Arab contiguity to the Arab neighborhoods of east Jerusalem, which are meant to become the capital of the Palestinian state.

The Palestinians want the E1 area to create territorial and demographic contiguity between their communities east and north of Jerusalem and the Arab neighborhoods in east Jerusalem, and to advance the city's division in a future arrangement. The Palestinians are also aware of the Allon Plan and want to thwart it.

Of course, the Palestinian claim to control over east Jerusalem – and especially over the Holy Basin, which includes the Temple Mount and the Western Wall – must be firmly rejected. The Palestinians are engaged in constructing a new narrative that denies the historical connection of Jews to Jerusalem, and in particular the existence of the Jewish Temples on the Temple Mount.

Significantly, Jews have constituted a majority in the city since the mid-19th century, and Jerusalem has never served as the capital of any Muslim entity. Furthermore, surveys indicate that most Arab residents of Jerusalem prefer the status quo, since rule by the Palestinian Authority or Hamas holds little appeal for them – rightly so.

Although Ehud Barak broke the Israeli taboo against compromising on a united Jerusalem at Camp David in 2000, nearly 70% of Jews (depending on how the question is phrased) still support keeping Jerusalem united. About 80% of Jews in the country say the Temple Mount cannot be relinquished in a peace agreement.

A Palestinian takeover of the E1 area would lead to the city's division, the isolation of Ma'aleh Adumim, and would undermine the State of Israel's claim to control over the Jordan Valley. Settling Jews in the E1 area, therefore, prevents the realization of the Palestinian plan.

SOME ARGUE that Israel no longer needs the Jordan Valley as protection against attacks from the east, since the peace treaty with Jordan has consigned to the past the dangerous threat once posed by the eastern front's proximity to Israel's population centers and economic infrastructure. They also dismiss the Valley's topographical importance, pointing to current military technology that enables precise strikes from a distance. In their view, the ability to launch defensive strikes from the coastal strip eliminates the need to hold the Jordan Valley.

Such arguments, however, are politically and militarily short-sighted. This position ignores the enormous potential in our region for rapid political change. Today, scenarios such as instability in Jordan or Saudi Arabia, or Islamist radicalization of the regime in Syria, can no longer be dismissed – any of which could revive the threat from the eastern front.

These experts likewise ignore the history of military technology, which shows a clear pattern of fluctuation over the centuries between the superiority of offense and defense. The belief that the current balance – in which existing technology temporarily diminishes the importance of topography – will remain unchanged is a dangerous fallacy.

Defensible borders that rely on transient technological superiority and changeable political circumstances amount to strategic folly. If Israel is genuinely interested in defensible borders along the Jordan Valley, it must therefore secure the road connecting the Valley to the coastal strip – a road that passes through a united Jerusalem and through Ma'aleh Adumim.

Furthermore, Israel's international standing could improve, and opposition to building in the E1 area could soften, if Israel simultaneously presented the world with a clear vision based on the principle of territorial compromise for a future (a distant one) in which the Palestinians are prepared to be good neighbors.

There does not appear to be great strategic wisdom in indiscriminate settlement throughout Judea, Samaria, and Gaza. The settlement movement seems to have forgotten that Jerusalem is the most important hill in the Land of Israel, and that its population lacks a Zionist majority.

The rush toward hills of questionable strategic importance wastes Zionist energy and resources that could be used more wisely elsewhere. Israeli governments should instead adopt a policy of selective settlement, focusing on areas at the heart of the Israeli consensus – Jerusalem and its surroundings, Ma'aleh Adumim, and the Jordan Valley – without provoking excessive external disruption.

Alongside such a policy, illegal outposts located outside the consensus areas, especially in Areas A and B, should be evacuated. And, of course, Jewish terrorism in Judea and Samaria – which constitutes a moral stain on Israel and causes tremendous damage abroad – must be firmly stopped.

The E1 area is vital to Jerusalem's political future, and its importance is equally decisive for Israel's ability to maintain a defensible border in the east. Building Jewish neighborhoods in this area is a strategic and political imperative.

The writer is a senior researcher at the Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security (JISS) and head of the Program in Diplomacy, Strategy and Security at Shalem Academic Center.

Israel is not Trump's exception

• By SHAY GAL

Israel is not US President Donald Trump's exception. Jerusalem and the Golan are historic proof of his preference, not of Israel's immunity. Israel can credit both without confusing gratitude with jurisdiction.

On August 16, Trump ordered the Pentagon to substantially reduce joint military exercises with South Korea. He cited their cost, his relationship with Kim Jong Un and Seoul's refusal to support American action against Iran. South Korean officials later said the directive surprised both Seoul and parts of the American government.

Iran and the Korean Peninsula belong to different theaters. Trump put them on the same invoice.

The leverage came from within an intact alliance.

Trump commands finite inventories, ranks theaters and reallocates power. American interest sets the bargain; chemistry, prestige and the transaction at hand reprice it. No alliance escapes that arithmetic.

When Trump was asked this year whether weapons destined for Ukraine could be diverted elsewhere, his answer dispensed with euphemism: "We do that all the time."

The weapon may defend Kyiv. The inventory remains American.

Ukrainian money, commitments and battlefield need do not determine American allocation. Kyiv can secure weapons and still lose priority to another theatre. A military dependency becomes leverage the moment another capital controls its priority.

Denmark is a founding NATO ally, and the US already enjoys extensive military access to Greenland. None of that prevented Trump from repeatedly demanding American control of the territory.

A NATO border entered an American transaction.

Jerusalem has issued no formal position on Greenland, but at working levels Israel has aligned with Copenhagen and Europe. The Israeli interest is direct: normalizing coercion against one Western ally sets a precedent for coercing another. American protection confers no title over allied territory; strategic dependence none over allied decisions.

Ankara maintained relations with Moscow and Tehran, obstructed allied decisions and sustained coercion against Greece and Cyprus. Trump nevertheless moved to rehabilitate Erdogan politically and signaled sanctions relief.

Turkey did not become more reliable. It made itself expensive to lose.

Ankara manufactures relevance by preserving the problems it later offers to mediate. Erdogan can defy Washington in one theatre and sell access in another, as he did again this week on Iran.

India is the larger power, economy and democratic counterweight to China, yet autonomous from Washington. Pakistan offers narrower utility: military authority, access and channels to actors Washington needs to reach. When Washington needs immediate access, it has repeatedly preferred Pakistani usability to Indian autonomy.

Trump revived the bargain. Pakistan maintained access to Washington, Iran, China and the Gulf; when Iran became the priority, those contradictions restored Islamabad's value.

Pakistan's contradiction became its product.

Trump turns that reflex into an alliance incentive by rewarding behavior alliances were built to suppress. His most loyal allies are often the safest to squeeze because Washington expects the relationship to survive; difficult partners manufacture scarcity and raise the cost of bypassing them.

Loyalty without optionality is exposure.

Trump can be pro-Israel and pro-Erdogan simultaneously. Strategic support for Israel does not erase Turkish utility in another American calculation.

The relevant evidence is not what Trump says about Israel. It is what he gives Turkey when Turkey becomes useful.

Israel has acted on that principle in Syria: American objections raise the diplomatic cost of an Israeli redline; they confer no vote over it.

For Athens and Nicosia, Turkish power is the threat; for Washington, it remains an instrument in Syria, Iran, the Black Sea and NATO. The United States can recognize an ally's threat and preserve the actor producing it.

ISRAEL IS not South Korea or Ukraine. It commands its own military, intelligence and defense industry and can initiate major operations independently. Yet critical capabilities depend on American replenishment, munitions and production capacity.

Accumulated dependencies need no formal veto; they can create an authorization regime without a treaty ever granting one. Dependency also habituates: assistance becomes assumption, consultation becomes procedure, and Washington acquires standing in decisions that remain Israeli.

Trump's admiration for Israel remains subordinate to American interest. The Strait of Hormuz, oil prices, American casualties, China, Turkey and domestic politics reorder American priorities. Access to Trump shapes outcomes; it does not control that calculation.

A steadier White House would change the operator, not the dependency.

Washington is larger than Trump. Ankara's purchase of Russia's S-400 air defense system removed Turkey from the F-35 program. Trump can rehabilitate Erdogan faster than Washington can arm him: he can reopen the aircraft question, but while the S-400 remains, American law, Congress, the Pentagon, program security and export controls stand between presidential preference and delivery.

Israel's advantage is its institutional depth in Washington: Jerusalem must use it to hedge Trump, and Israeli capacity to hedge Washington. The same institutions that can block a Turkish F-35 cannot manufacture an interceptor after an Israeli stockpile is empty.

Every critical capability requires four answers: who owns it, who replenishes it, who can withhold it, and how long Israel can operate without it. If one foreign decision can disable it, Israel requires an alternative.

Israel still reads Europe politically and America strategically. That hierarchy is obsolete. American power is greater; European interests are anchored in geography. Washington can pivot. Europe cannot move the Mediterranean.

Crete and Cyprus anchor Israel's corridor into Europe for energy, cables, shipping and military access. Turkish coercion there strikes Israeli access, not merely Greek or Cypriot interests.

The European Union is Israel's largest goods trading partner, accounting for nearly one third of its trade. Israeli capabilities now support German and Finnish air and missile defense, Czech air defense and radar, Dutch long-range fires, and Greek cooperation across air defense, drones, missiles, maritime security and production.

Iran and Turkey give that architecture its threat logic: Iranian missiles, drones and proliferation beyond the Middle East; Turkish forward power from Syria to occupied northern Cyprus, directly across Israel's Mediterranean corridor.

Israeli capability is becoming European defense capacity; European geography, industry and markets extend Israeli depth.

A pro-Israel president is an asset. A security doctrine that requires one is a national vulnerability.

The writer is Founder and Principal of Line of State, a strategic practice working with governments, institutions and decision-makers on strategy, risk, access and security decisions in high-stakes environments.

Voting in Israel promotes Jewish unity

• By SHERWIN POMERANTZ

Recently, Kalman Liebskind, one of the founding journalists of *Makor Rishon*, wrote a piece positing that people who no longer live in Israel who are returning to vote have a lot of nerve.

In that piece, which appears in Hebrew, he wrote: "The people coming back to vote are doing something profoundly immoral. They don't live here, they didn't fight in the war, they've chosen not to be part of this society – so they have no right to decide who will govern us." While I have full respect for Liebeskind's right to feel the way he does, I strongly disagree, on a number of counts, with both his premise and his conclusions.

First of all, if those who choose to live abroad have not renounced their Israeli citizenship, then according to Israeli law they are fully entitled to vote if they present themselves at a polling station on election day. There is nothing immoral about their doing so.

The law gives them the right to vote and, quite frankly, I have always been impressed with Israeli citizens living abroad who still feel so strongly about what is happening here that they are willing to bear the cost of traveling to the country for one day simply to exercise their legal right to vote.

By contrast, as someone living here who holds dual Israel-US citizenship, I cannot see myself ever being willing to spend the time and money to travel to the US simply to vote. If America would eliminate mail-in balloting, I would simply not vote. The fact that Israelis living abroad feel otherwise is, quite frankly, impressive.

Of course, if there is a groundswell of opinion that the law should be changed, then those who feel strongly about this should work on changing the law. However, someone exercising his or her right under the law cannot be classified as immoral simply for doing so.

Secondly, Liebskind makes assumptions about these people which could simply be untrue. For example, when he wrote, "they didn't fight in the war," while it may be true that they did not fight in the current war, it is certainly possible and even probable that they or their children may have fought in previous wars; after all, we certainly have had our share of them. It may well have been a factor that led them to leave Israel, having already experienced the fear of the "knock on the door" once in their lives (or perhaps even the actual "knock") and not wanting to have that experience ever again.

Similarly, when he wrote, "they've chosen not to be part of this society," what does that really mean? I would venture to say that the overwhelming majority of these people still have family living here. No doubt most travel here with some frequency, perhaps send their children here every summer to spend time with grandparents and cousins, as well as share some of their financial success with philanthropic institutions that operate in Israel. Does that not qualify them yet as part of this society? I would submit that it does.

In addition, of course, one needs to be very careful when stratifying who can vote by whether or not they have chosen to be part of this society. There are those here in Israel who would argue that certain elements within Israel have made choices not to be part of this society as well.

Does Liebskind want to also apply that same standard to citizens living here? It seems to me that such a "litmus test" starts us on a slippery slope toward autocracy that would be better avoided if we want to preserve democracy.

Lastly, it would appear that Liebskind has lost sight of worldwide Jewish demographics. If we were to sit across a table from each other, I would ask him whether it is possible for a people whose global population is just 15.8 million people to be completely detached from the country where 50% of us live?

HAVE WE not internalized the concept that "when one Jew is injured, all Jews feel the pain?" This is an ancient tenet of Jewish peoplehood and mutual responsibility, often traced back to teachings from the classical sages, such as Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai in the Mechilta, expressing that the Jewish community functions as an interconnected collective. This shared vulnerability reflects a profound, interconnected sense of peoplehood where violence against one member is felt as an injury to the whole. And the corollary is also true: we have a responsibility to care for each other wherever we are in the world.

We, who compose the 15.8 million Jews in the world, are one small community, older than any other yet considerably fewer in numbers than normal generational growth would have predicted.

Therefore, it is simply not honest to take the position that Israeli citizens living abroad who come here only to vote are immoral. On the contrary, their doing so is very much in the spirit of Jewish unity and serves as an incredible lesson of responsibility being taught to their children and grandchildren, that we all, no matter where we live, have a stake in each other's lives and a moral obligation to demonstrate that commitment whenever the opportunity presents itself.

To those who will travel here to vote on election day, I would say thank you for continuing to care about us and for remembering, *"Kol Yisrael arevim zeh bazeh,"* the Hebrew phrase that signifies a profound, mutual responsibility where every Jewish person acts as a guarantor for one another. We are grateful for your support and encouragement wherever you may reside.

The writer, a 42-year resident of Jerusalem, is a former national president of the Association of Americans and Canadians in Israel, a past chairperson of the board of the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies, and a Board Member of the Israel-America Chamber of Commerce (AMCHAM).

Conflicting priorities

WASHINGTON WATCH

• By DOUGLAS BLOOMFIELD

DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATE for US Senate Abdul El-Sayed speaks during a unity rally in Detroit earlier this month. (Rebecca Cook/Reuters)

If you believe that Donald Trump is the most dangerous and destructive US president in recent times, if not ever, and that the threats he poses to American democracy, the rule of law, and world peace must be thwarted, is it is essential that Democrats gain control of the House and Senate on November 6.

One crucial Senate race that Democrats need to win is the Michigan seat being vacated by retiring Sen. Gary Peters. That poses a dilemma for Michigan voters, particularly Jews and friends of Israel, following the Democratic primary win by Abdul El-Sayed, a harsh critic of Israel.

The subservient Republican-led Congress has dreadfully failed in its constitutional responsibility as an independent branch to combat the excesses of this president, who falsely claims Article II of the Constitution gives him the "right to do whatever I want as president."

Two-thirds of American voters tell pollsters they disapprove of the job the president is doing, and fewer than one in eight feel that Congress is doing a good job.

All indications are this will be a change election. More so than in many years, every vote and every seat counts, particularly in the Senate, which must approve Trump's nominees for top administration and judicial posts, a particularly critical function as he continues remaking the nation's government in his own extremist image.

For the past two years, the GOP-led Senate has rubber-stamped Trump's unqualified nominees, such as Pete Hegseth, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., Tulsi Gabbard, Kash Patel, Todd Blanche, Pam Bondi, and Kristi Noem, among others. And it will continue to do so if they control the next Senate. More reason why Michigan is a must-win for Democrats.

El-Sayed's nomination poses a vexing problem for Israel-focused Jewish voters. A Muslim and a physician, who holds a PhD from Oxford University, he was born in the Detroit suburbs to Egyptian immigrants. If elected, he would be America's first Muslim senator, but not the first Arab-American senator; Michigan, South Dakota, and New Jersey have had Arab-American senators.

Four members of the current 119th Congress are Muslim, all Democrats, and in the House of Representatives. There are 10 Jewish senators, nine Democrats, and one independent, and 25 Jewish representatives. All but four are Democrats.

WHAT WAS supposed to be a likely Democratic seat has become the most controversial and divisive contest for the party as well as pro-Israel voters. Michigan has one of the largest Arab and Muslim populations in the nation, more than triple the state's Jewish population. Its opposition to former president Joe Biden's support for Israel helped swing the state in Trump's favor two years ago.

The Republican nominee for the Senate seat is former Rep. Mike Rogers, who had a pro-Israel record in the House and good relations with the state's Jewish community.

Many Democrats are troubled by their nominee's Middle East views, but agree with much of his liberal domestic and social views. This is quite the reverse with Rogers, who is running on his support for the Trump agenda. Rogers lost his Senate bid two years ago to Elissa Slotkin, who is Jewish.

AIPAC and its political action committee spent some $32 million trying to defeat El-Sayed. Its support had once been highly sought after by candidates in both parties, but in recent years, thanks to its hard swing to the Right with its embrace of Trump, election deniers, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and for Israel's conduct of the Israel-Hamas War, the organization has become a pariah and its money is viewed as toxic in some races.

Rogers personally asked the group to drop any ads on his behalf. Pro-Israel voters yes, AIPAC no. He also recognizes that public attitudes toward Israel have turned negative. Even pro-Israel candidates have spurned AIPAC this year.

Netanyahu and AIPAC's attacks have done more than anything else to win the nomination for El-Sayed, who has said, "I want AIPAC to cease to be a force in Democratic elections."

El-Sayed's primary success was a major victory for the pro-Palestinian movement and a stunning defeat for the pro-Israel lobby. As a senator, he will want to put those views on the agenda.

Many pro-Israel activists, former AIPAC staff, and supporters agree. We believe the group's decisions to go partisan, to tie itself so tightly to the corrupt and extremist Netanyahu regime, to rate and endorse candidates and to create PACs have proven a catastrophic mistake that has done incalculable harm to the US-Israel alliance.

When asked if he believes in Israel's right to exist as a national homeland for the Jews, El-Sayed dodges and dismisses it as a "gotcha." "Israel exists," he answers. According to *The New York Times,* he has said: "Israel should not exist as an explicitly Jewish state."

That understandably alienates many of Israel's supporters in the mainstream of the Democratic Party and the Jewish community.

He appears to prefer a secular binational state, or letting the parties decide whether they want one or two states. He said he doesn't believe in "ethno-states" for anyone.

He has called for an immediate and total halt to US military aid and weapons deliveries to Israel and Egypt, among others. He considers Israel's response to the Hamas-led October 7, 2023, massacres a "genocide," and has called Netanyahu "a war criminal." He said the actions of Israel and Hamas were equally indefensible.

Many Jews were troubled by his response to the March attack on Temple Israel in West Bloomfield, Michigan, when he seemed to defend the attacker, who reportedly lost some family members in a recent Israeli attack in Lebanon.

"Hurt people hurt people," he said, which some saw as justification for the synagogue attack.

Some Jewish Democratic donors are endorsing and raising money for Rogers. Rabbi Asher Lopatin, director of community relations for the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor, where El-Sayed lives, endorsed Rogers, saying El-Sayed "has only shown contempt for the Jews."

He rejects the antisemitism label, insisting his commitment to Jewish safety is equal to that for his own daughters. Antisemitism and Islamophobia must both be fought equally, he added. Michigan Jewish leaders feel his denunciation of antisemitism has been too weak.

GIVEN THE threats to America and the Free World posed by an unchecked Trump administration for the next two years, the election of a Democratic Congress should be the highest priority.

El-Sayed's election may be necessary to convince AIPAC and Israeli leaders that they have a serious problem, and kissing Trump's narcissistic ring isn't working. They are in great danger of losing their most important allies unless they make some dramatic changes – and quickly.

Israelis will also have a chance this fall to elect a new government, one that can move toward reconciliation not only in that deeply divided country and with the Palestinians, but also with the friends that Netanyahu sacrificed on the altar of his personal ambitions. Rebuilding bipartisan support in Washington, which Netanyahu and AIPAC have squandered, is urgently needed.

The writer is a Washington-based journalist, consultant, lobbyist, and former legislative director at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

Netanyahu needs a war to win

ENCOUNTERING PEACE

• By GERSHON BASKIN

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has a serious problem. Israel is approaching an election in which voters will be asked to judge not only the country's longest-serving prime minister but the man who was prime minister on October 7.

If the election becomes a referendum on responsibility for the greatest security failure in Israel's history, the hostages, the economic cost of prolonged war, Israel's international isolation, and the government's failure to turn military achievements into a better strategic reality, Netanyahu faces a difficult election. But if Israel goes to elections while fighting another war, the political terrain changes.

Netanyahu can once again present himself as "Mr. Security": the experienced leader standing between Israel and enemies determined to destroy us. Responsibility for yesterday is pushed aside by fear of tomorrow. Netanyahu needs a war to win.

It may not matter much where it is fought. It could be Gaza, where Israel has still failed to transform Hamas's military defeat into a viable political alternative. It could be the West Bank, where settlement expansion, settler violence, and Palestinian despair increase the danger of a major explosion. It could be Lebanon, Syria, or Iran. Given the deterioration in relations with Ankara, even a confrontation involving Turkey can no longer be dismissed as unimaginable.

Netanyahu's great political advantage has always been fear. He does not need Israelis to believe everything is going well. He needs them to believe everything is dangerous and that only he is experienced and tough enough to protect them.

October 7 should have destroyed the myth of "Mr. Security." Instead, Netanyahu has spent the years since rebuilding it. The catastrophe did not occur because Israel lacked military power. It came after years in which Netanyahu's governments convinced themselves that the Palestinian conflict could be managed rather than resolved, Hamas contained, the Palestinian Authority weakened, and military superiority substituted for political strategy.

Since October 7, Israel has demonstrated extraordinary military capabilities. But tactical military success is not strategic victory. The purpose of military force is to produce a political reality better than the one that existed before the fighting began. By that standard, Israel's achievements remain incomplete.

Hamas has been devastated, but legitimate Palestinian governance has still not been allowed to take full responsibility in Gaza. Gaza remains destroyed and unstable. The West Bank is moving toward greater violence. Iran remains a strategic threat. Lebanon lacks a durable political arrangement with Israel, and relations with Turkey are deteriorating.

NETANYAHU KNOWS how to order military operations. What he repeatedly refuses to do is cash military achievements in for diplomatic and political gains. That is the central failure of his leadership.

A strategic leader would use Hamas's weakening to replace it with legitimate Palestinian governance backed by Arab states and an international security structure. He would use Israel's military strength to negotiate from confidence, connect Saudi normalization to Palestinian statehood, and build a regional structure in which Israeli security depends less on permanent control over Palestinians and more on secure borders, regional partners, and enforceable guarantees.

That would be victory.

Another bombed building is not victory. Another assassination is not victory. Another military operation that produces only the next military operation is not victory. Israel has demonstrated that it can destroy. The question is whether its government knows how to build anything afterward.

War serves Netanyahu politically because diplomacy requires decisions while war postpones them. Peace requires deciding what happens in Gaza after Hamas, whether Israel intends to rule Palestinians forever, what happens to the settlements, and whether Palestinian statehood is ultimately in Israel's interest.

War postpones those questions. It also transforms an election campaign. When missiles are flying and reservists are being called up, October 7 becomes yesterday's argument. The immediate question becomes: Who can protect us now? Netanyahu knows how to campaign on that terrain better than almost anyone in Israeli history.

Every proposed war should have to answer four questions: What is the military objective? What is the political objective? What happens the day after? How does this make Israel safer five or 10 years from now?

The IDF chief of staff also bears an extraordinary responsibility. He is subordinate to Israel's elected civilian government and does not determine national policy. But his professional duty is not simply to mobilize whatever forces the political leadership demands. He must give the cabinet his best professional judgment about whether a proposed war is actually necessary for Israel's defense.

If Netanyahu proposes a new war, or renews an existing one, before elections and the chief of staff concludes professionally that it is unnecessary for Israel's defense and is being driven primarily by political considerations, he has a duty to tell the cabinet and government so unequivocally.

And if, despite that warning, the government orders the IDF into a war the chief of staff believes is not necessary to protect Israel, he faces an extraordinary choice. He should not turn the IDF into an instrument for protecting a prime minister's political future.

If that is genuinely his professional conclusion, he should resign rather than personally lead the army into such a war, and tell the Israeli public – without revealing operational secrets – why he can no longer take professional responsibility for the decision.

That would not be a military coup against civilian authority. The elected government would remain free to appoint another chief of staff and pursue its lawful policy. It would be an act of professional accountability by the officer entrusted with the lives of Israel's soldiers.

Because soldiers are not political assets. Israeli soldiers die. Reservists lose months of their lives. Families live under constant anxiety. The economy absorbs another shock. Palestinians pay an enormous civilian price, and whenever the battlefield expands, Lebanese, Syrians, and Iranians may pay as well.

THE QUESTION is therefore not whether Israel has the military capacity to start another war. It usually does. The question is whether the war is necessary.

And Israelis should ask one uncomfortable question: Does this war make Israel safer, or does it make Netanyahu politically safer?

There is also the disturbing possibility that a major security crisis close to election day could create pressure to postpone elections. I am not claiming Netanyahu has such a plan, and an Israeli prime minister cannot simply cancel elections by decree.

But one principle should be established now: War cannot become an electoral strategy, and national emergency cannot become an instrument for postponing democratic accountability.

The alternative Netanyahu should fear most is not another enemy army. It is an end to the wars.

Imagine Israel approaching elections with Hamas removed from government, a new Palestinian administration entering Gaza, Israeli forces withdrawing as Palestinian and international forces take responsibility, reconstruction underway, Saudi normalization advancing, and the United States leading a regional process that strengthens Israeli security while creating a genuine political future for Palestinians.

What does Netanyahu campaign on then? He would finally have to defend his record rather than defend the country against the next emergency. He would have to answer for October 7, for the belief that Hamas could be managed, for weakening Palestinian moderates, and for repeatedly failing to transform military superiority into political strategy.

Israel needs strength. It needs a powerful military and the willingness to use force when necessary. But permanent war is not strength. The real test of power is whether it produces a political outcome that makes the next war less likely.

Netanyahu has spent decades telling Israelis that only he can keep them safe. If he needs Israel to remain at war in order to remain in power, Israelis should ask a much simpler question: Whose security is he really protecting?

The writer is the Middle East director of the International Communities Organization and the co-head of the Alliance for Two States.

‘Iran, Oman reach accord on Hormuz’

• By YOMNA EHAB
and JANA CHOUKEIR

CAIRO/DUBAI (Reuters) – Iran and Oman have reached agreement on their share of the Strait of Hormuz and its revenues, but the vital waterway will not be reopened if the US does not accept their conditions, Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corp (IRGC) said on Wednesday.

Iran and Oman have held on-and-off talks for weeks about controlling traffic through the strait, which handled one-fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas shipments before the war began in February.

Most shipping has since been shut down, driving global energy prices higher, as Tehran and Washington have tried to assert control over the channel, imposing separate blockades.

“The Strait of Hormuz belongs to Iran and the country of Oman... We have been in negotiations with Oman for about a month, and we have reached results that are acceptable to both sides,” IRGC spokesman Hossein Mohebbi said in comments published by Iranian state media.

“In these negotiations, agreements have been reached regarding the share of each country in the waters of the strait, and the share of Iran and Oman in its revenues,” Mohebbi added.

The IRGC accused the United States of seeking to obstruct the negotiations between Iran and Oman, and said this had caused the agreement to be delayed.

“If the United States stops obstructing and returns to the agreement, we can open the Strait of Hormuz within the framework of the agreement reached... If the United States does not accept our conditions, the Strait of Hormuz will not be opened under any circumstances,” Mohebbi said.

Though active hostilities between the US and Iran have largely subsided in recent weeks, diplomatic efforts to reach a peace deal have stalled, and continuing attacks on ships mean passage through the Strait of Hormuz remains perilous.

Iran announced a blacklist on Sunday of 45 ships in an apparent effort to stop ship-to-ship transfers used by Gulf energy producers to evade the Iranian blockade. Some companies plan to stop using vessels added to the blacklist, sources said.

In an effort to tighten pressure on Iran’s economy, the United States earlier this week threatened to punish countries that continue to do business with Iran, but said it would not impose penalties immediately.

The sanctions did not feature Chinese financial institutions suspected of facilitating oil exports from Iran that the US blockade has cut.

Iran denounced the US effort to isolate its economy as an act of “gross lawlessness,” expressing confidence that many countries would not join the pressure campaign.

Oil prices fell for a third day, dropping more than $2 a barrel to a two-week low, following signs of renewed efforts to seek a mediated end to the war that began on February 28.

‘Everybody has a Dolly Parton song’

•Reuters

MOURNERS PAY their respects to Dolly Parton at the Dolly Parton Statue in downtown Sevierville, Tennessee, on Tuesday. (Angelina Alcantar/USA Today Network via Reuters)

When Dolly Parton tribute artist Brooke McMullen woke up to messages about the death of the country music star, she thought it was a hoax.

Dolly could never die. Parton was “one of those people that you just think is going to be around forever,” McMullen said from Brisbane, Australia. “Her loss is huge.”

Fans across continents, from prime ministers to pop stars, felt the same jolt and flooded social media with messages of grief and affection.

Part of Parton’s appeal came from the stories she told in her songs, said McMullen, who takes her tribute show across Australia.

“All of her stories are real life and you can connect,” she added.

“Everybody’s got at least one of the songs that they connect to, whether it be that was something that their grandmother introduced them to, whether it be they heard that at a wedding that they went to. Everybody has a Dolly Parton song.”

Fans said Parton had a rare ability to appeal to audiences across a wide range of political persuasions, age groups, genders and cultures.

“Your songs taught us to fall in love and how to express,” Uganda’s exiled opposition leader Bobi Wine wrote on X. “We will always love you,” the rapper-turned-politician added.

British pop icon Elton John called her a “giant of an artist” who had the kindest heart.

“It is hard to imagine living in a world without Dolly,” Paul McCartney wrote. Her songwriting, singing and philanthropy were unrivaled in the world of country music, he added.

In Japan, where Parton only toured once in 1979, music figures paid tribute.

Seiji Kameda, a prominent music producer and bassist for the rock band Tokyo Jihen, said he had been captivated by Parton’s voice since his first year of junior high school.

“Her voice shone like the sun and will endure forever. Rest in peace,” he wrote on X.

Politicians praised her contributions to society as well as her music.

“I was a huge fan of what Dolly did around literacy around the world,” British Prime Minister Andy Burnham told reporters.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said Parton made an enormous difference through promoting education and funding hospitals, and that there would be many broken hearts across his country.

“She lived loudly, and she lived a great life, and she’ll be much missed,” he told reporters.

McMullen, the tribute artist, said she had a show booked for the weekend, but wasn’t sure how she would approach it.

Putting on the Dolly Parton wig and sequin dress for shows was always a special moment.

“I don’t look like Dolly Parton just sitting here,” McMullen said.

“But it’s as soon as you put on all of that and you know, step out onto the stage and everybody is so excited because they just adore Dolly.”

UK police officers face probe over Israeli soccer fans’ ban

LONDON (Reuters) – A former British regional police chief and three other officers are being investigated for misconduct over a decision to ban soccer fans of Maccabi Tel Aviv from attending a game last year, the independent police watchdog said on Wednesday.

The West Midlands police force, which covers Birmingham in central England and is one of Britain’s biggest, had recommended that the Israeli fans should not be allowed to attend a Europa League match against Aston Villa last November because of security concerns.

The decision was condemned by both the British and Israeli governments, and Jewish community leaders accused the force of misrepresenting intelligence and undermining public confidence.

The game went ahead without Maccabi fans. There was no major disruption although police made 11 arrests when pro-Palestinian and pro-Israeli supporters demonstrated outside the stadium.

The chief constable of West Midlands Police Craig Guildford announced his immediate retirement in January after Britain’s interior minister said she no longer had confidence in him, and a report found that his force had made a number of mistakes.

On Wednesday, the Independent Office for Police Conduct said it was now investigating Guildford and a staff member for gross misconduct, and three other officers for lesser misconduct offences.

“We have examined a wealth of material, hundreds of pieces of evidence, and believe there is an indication some people serving with the police may potentially have behaved in a manner that could justify disciplinary proceedings,” IOPC Director of Engagement Derrick Campbell said in a statement.

West Midlands Police said the initial ban was based on current intelligence and past incidents. But an independent inquiry found that it had overstated the threat from Israeli fans, relied on inaccurate intelligence, and missed opportunities to engage with the local Jewish community.

Ukraine grain exports slowed as 70 ships queue in Danube bottleneck

• By PAVEL POLITYUK

KYIV (Reuters) – Up to 70 vessels are waiting near the Danube’s Sulina Canal for access to Ukrainian ports to load grain for export, traders and analysts said on Wednesday, with a shortage of pilots and priority given to other cargoes creating long delays.

After Russian attacks effectively blocked Ukraine’s Black Sea ports, which had handled 90% of the country’s grain exports, some shipments were rerouted through Danube river ports, which have much lower capacity.

Grain cargoes are competing for access with higher-priority shipments such as fuel, slowing exports. Frequent air raid alerts, which force the suspension of all port operations, have added to the disruption.

Ukraine is one of the world’s biggest grain exporters and disruptions to its shipments can drive up global prices.

“As of August 25, more than 50 vessels were waiting to pass through the Sulina Channel, while only five to seven vessels per day were moving towards Ukraine’s Danube ports,” consultancy ASAP Agri said.

The consultancy said on Telegram that each day of delay can cost up to $8,000, adding to already high freight rates.

“The situation could worsen if weather conditions deteriorate in the coming days,” it added.

Katerina Kononenko, operations manager at Avalon shipping, said the Sulina Canal was expected to be closed for about two days because of poor weather.

“For the current situation, this is really a serious setback. Today, about 70 vessels are waiting at Sulina road. At the moment, the real traffic capacity of the Sulina Channel for vessels going to Ukrainian ports is only two to three vessels per day. This is very low,” she added.

Ukraine also relied heavily on Danube ports earlier in the war when Russia blocked the ports of the Greater Odesa region. Grain export capacity through the Danube peaked at 2.5 million metric tons a month in 2022 to 2023.

Export volumes via the Danube remain well below those levels, although traders are gradually increasing shipments. State railway operator Ukrzaliznytsia said this month that grain transport volumes to Danube ports in August were 11 times higher than in July.

Agriculture Ministry data show Ukraine exported 539,000 tons of grain from August 1 to August 21, compared with 1.73 million in the same period a year earlier.

Media storm over Harry and Meghan’s UK return shows the power and peril of their brand

• By KATE HOLTON
and FRANCESCA HALLIWELL

PRINCE HARRY and his wife Meghan disembark after sailing on Sydney Harbor with veterans from the Invictus Australia community, in Sydney, in April. (Hollie Adams/Reuters)

LONDON (Reuters) – If Prince Harry and his wife Meghan were hoping the press would give them an easier time on their return to Britain, the frenzied reporting around her potential new acting role may indicate how they, and their brand, will fare.

With most royal commentators flummoxed by the couple’s return to Britain on Wednesday, six years after they left for the US, reports emerged that Meghan was in talks to appear in a Guy Ritchie Netflix crime drama, before a new report said a backlash had prompted the offer to be withdrawn.

While neither side confirmed nor denied any talks, branding experts said it showed what the couple would offer to brands and entertainment groups as they build their life outside the royal family: huge media interest, polarized opinions, and drama.

But it also shows the challenge they will face as they seek to promote the charities and brands they work with and attempt to maintain some kind of privacy, in a country where polling shows they have become unpopular, at least among older people.

“You can’t buy this kind of publicity for a TV show,” entertainment journalist Caroline Frost told Reuters.

Mark Borkowski, a British PR guru, agreed. “Both Harry and Meghan give people visibility. They can generate an audience.”

Harry, the 41-year-old younger son of King Charles, and Meghan, 45, are returning to Britain six years after they cited the intense media scrutiny as one reason they were quitting royal duties to carve out independent careers, backed by commercial tie-ups.

In the early years, they made headlines around the world when, through an interview with Oprah Winfrey, a Netflix documentary series and Harry’s autobiography “Spare,” they criticized the royal family and lambasted the British press.

Borkowski said the “trashing of the royal family” angered many people in Britain, where a July YouGov poll showed that 64% of respondents want to retain the monarchy.

“People just found it unpalatable that he was attacking the very family that brought him up,” he said.

Since then, a reported $100 million Netflix deal and a $20 million Spotify agreement have been downgraded and brought to an end respectively, while Meghan’s lifestyle brand As Ever has struggled to take off – setbacks that have been reported with glee by some British newspapers.

Branding experts said a return to Britain could offer the chance for a reset.

Pauline MacLaran, professor of marketing at Royal Holloway University, said a move to the English countryside could work well for Meghan’s lifestyle brand, which sells spreads, candles, teas, and wine in the US.

“Her coming to England could really bring about a new story, the English touch, the English flavor. And I think that would be very popular with her American consumers to refresh the brand,” she said, adding that Meghan would likely struggle to sell in Britain.

Catherine Mayer, an author who has written about the treatment of women in the royal family, said while there was initially a lot of excitement when Meghan first moved to Britain, the fairytale curdled quickly.

“She has had some of the worst coverage, and consistently terrible coverage, that I have seen in all my research,” she said, adding that inevitably affected their business interests.

To their supporters, Harry and Meghan were a young couple forced to flee Britain to avoid racist and misogynistic reporting, unwilling to play the game where the press and the royals cooperate to keep the monarchy at the center of the national story.

To their detractors, they sold their story to the highest bidder, making tens of millions of pounds by dishing the dirt on Harry’s family, threatening the future of the institution and all while demanding their own privacy.

To add to the picture, Harry has, in recent years, sued many of Britain’s leading tabloids for invasions of privacy.

Entertainment journalist Frost said Britons can be quick to judge, but they respect those who work hard – and a return to acting for Meghan, particularly on the stage, could change the narrative. She added, however, that it could also be hard for someone so famous to disappear into a role.

Borkowski said both Harry and Meghan were assured performers in public, capable of drawing attention to any charities they work with, but they would need a new approach to handle the intense scrutiny from social and legacy media that will resume.

“If they listen to good advice and they surround themselves with good people, then I think the future’s bright,” he said.

Turkey says SDF dissolution will help with Syrian unity

ISTANBUL (Reuters) – Turkey’s ruling AK Party welcomes the dissolution of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces as an important step towards strengthening Syrian unity, a spokesman for President Tayyip Erdogan’s party said on Wednesday.

NATO member Turkey has emerged as one of the main allies of neighboring Syria’s President Ahmed al-Sharaa after he toppled Bashar al-Assad’s decades-long rule.

Ankara has vowed to help Damascus rebuild the country and restructure its state institutions and armed forces, and it has provided Damascus with political and diplomatic support.

“An important threshold was passed in terms of strengthening Syria’s internal unity with the dissolution of the SDF,” AK Party spokesman Omer Celik wrote on X, adding Ankara supported Syria’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The announcement by SDF commander Mazloum Abdi of the group’s dissolution and integration into Syria’s armed forces under an agreement with Damascus comes amid peace efforts in Turkey with the outlawed Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) militant group, which Ankara views as linked to the SDF.

In February 2025, jailed PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan called on his group to disarm and disband, and it announced in May 2025 that it would do so. A group of militants symbolically burned their weapons at a ceremony in northern Iraq two months later.

As part of the process, Ankara has repeatedly said the SDF must also dissolve and disband, voicing support for the integration process.

Turkey, which backed rebels looking to oust Assad, had mounted several cross-border military operations against the SDF in northern Syria and still has thousands of troops stationed there. It says they will only be withdrawn once the security threats it faces are eliminated.

The government describes the peace process with the PKK as part of its goal of creating a “terror-free Turkey” and “terror-free region.” While Turkey’s parliament passed a law this month establishing a legal framework for the disbanding of the PKK, Kurdish politicians have said lasting peace will require broader democratic and legal reforms.

The PKK, designated a terrorist organization by Turkey, the United States and the European Union, launched its insurgency in 1984. The conflict has killed more than 40,000 people, imposed a heavy economic burden on mainly Kurdish southeast Turkey and fueled decades of political and social division.

Iran’s Hormuz plan shows military limitations

COMMENT

• By RYAN GITY

The Strait of Hormuz has exposed an uncomfortable truth about modern warfare: a military can destroy much of an adversary’s force, achieve overwhelming air superiority and strike thousands of targets, yet still fail to control the geography that gives the adversary strategic leverage.

Since the war with Iran began in late February, the United States and Israel have applied extraordinary military power. According to US government figures, Operation Epic Fury involved more than 10,000 sorties and strikes on more than 13,000 targets, including command-and-control nodes, air defenses, missile forces, drone infrastructure and naval assets. Washington later claimed that roughly 150 Iranian vessels had been destroyed. Even allowing for uncertainty in those assessments, the scale of the kinetic achievement is clear.

Yet by mid-August, months after the opening strikes, one of the war’s most important strategic questions remained unresolved: who actually controls the Strait of Hormuz? Last Friday, only two commercial vessels were observed transiting the strait during the day, compared with more than 130 a day before the war. Commercial vessels were still being attacked, and the United States remained compelled to maintain substantial naval and air power in the area. Airpower did not fail; it largely did what it was designed to do. The problem was that what remained after the strikes was a different kind of military problem.

Hormuz connects the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman and the Indian Ocean. At its narrowest point, it is roughly 34 km wide, but the effective maneuver space for large commercial vessels is much smaller: two shipping lanes approximately three kilometers wide. Before the war, roughly 20 million barrels of oil passed through the strait every day, alongside a major share of global LNG trade. Yet its military importance comes from its geometry. Iran controls the northern coastline, while Bandar Abbas, Qeshm, Larak, Hormuz Island and the Tunbs form a network of observation points, launch sites, concealed bases and staging areas overlooking a compressed maritime environment. For Tehran, Hormuz is not merely a waterway. It is a geographic weapon system.

Iran spent decades building a force designed to exploit that geography. It never tried to match the United States carrier for carrier or destroyer for destroyer. Instead, it built a system for sea denial. Sea control means being able to use an area while preventing an adversary from using it; sea denial requires much less. It is enough to make an opponent’s use dangerous, expensive and unpredictable. Iran does not need to sink an American aircraft carrier to succeed. It does not even need to physically close Hormuz. It only needs to make tanker owners, insurers and captains ask whether the risk is worth it.

Its force structure follows from that logic: naval mines, fast attack craft, mobile coastal anti-ship missiles, one-way attack drones, surveillance networks, small submarines and unmanned systems operating above, on and beneath the surface. None is decisive alone. The difficulty emerges when all of them exist simultaneously, dispersed across coastline, islands, tunnels and mobile positions. The adversary does not need to be everywhere; it needs to make you believe it could be anywhere.

VESSELS NEAR the Strait of Hormuz, as seen this week from Musandam, Oman. Iran does not need to sink a US aircraft carrier to succeed. It does not even need to physically close Hormuz. It only needs to make tanker owners, insurers, and captains ask whether the risk is worth it. (Reuters)

A single mine not found can affect commercial traffic more than dozens already destroyed. One mobile launcher whose position is unknown can turn large areas of coastline into potential firing zones. This is asymmetric warfare at its most effective: turning inexpensive, distributed and difficult-to-find systems into an enduring problem for a technologically superior force.

Here lies the central paradox of the campaign. The United States and Israel proved they could destroy ships, missile batteries, radars, command centers and production sites at scale. But Hormuz exposed the boundary between destroying military capability and controlling operational space. After the initial campaign, the United States still had to launch a separate effort to restore freedom of navigation. Mine-clearance operations began in April, and in early May Project Freedom was launched to maintain safe passage for commercial shipping. More than 15,000 US service members were reportedly involved, supported by destroyers, helicopters and more than 100 manned and unmanned aircraft providing round-the-clock coverage. Meanwhile, more than 1,500 commercial vessels were waiting inside the Gulf, unable or unwilling to leave.

After one of the region’s most intensive air campaigns, more than 15,000 personnel and hundreds of platforms were still needed to secure passage through a relatively narrow body of water. Not because the United States lacked power, but because the mission had changed. Destruction is episodic. Control is persistent. A strike happens at a moment in time; control must exist every moment.

IT IS tempting to conclude that the West simply underestimated Iran. That is only partly true. The United States knew about these threats; they had appeared for years in intelligence assessments, war games, and CENTCOM planning. The deeper problem is conceptual: Western force design remains far better optimized for finding and destroying targets than for persistently understanding and controlling complex terrain. Modern militaries excel at the kill chain – detect, classify, decide, strike. Hormuz requires something broader: sense, understand, predict, persist, act, verify and repeat, thousands of times, every hour, for weeks or months.

Iran’s objective was never necessarily to survive as a conventional navy. It was to survive as a network. Networks regenerate, relocate and hide. A launcher on an island can be destroyed, but another can appear tomorrow. A shipping lane can be cleared of mines, but new mines can be laid at night. The question therefore eventually becomes not only how to destroy another launcher, but who controls the terrain that allows it to return. The United States has understandably avoided seizing strategic islands or parts of the Iranian coast because such operations carry major risks and escalation. But the cost of occupying terrain does not make the military problem created by that terrain disappear.

Geography still matters.

The answer is not a return to mass armies. Hormuz points toward a different force architecture. In environments that demand continuous presence across dangerous and contested spaces, humans should no longer perform every surveillance, patrol, detection and response mission. The persistent layer of the battlefield should increasingly be held by distributed networks of unmanned systems in the air, on the surface, underwater and on land.

But adding unmanned platforms is not enough. Hundreds of drones streaming more video into a command center merely move the bottleneck from the battlefield to the operator. The real challenge is to build systems capable of understanding the terrain they observe: connecting sensors, identifying abnormal behavior, detecting change, distinguishing civilian activity from emerging threats, reacquiring mobile launchers and operating when communications are degraded or denied.

This is the difference between automation, autonomy and cognition. In such an architecture, unmanned systems should increasingly own persistence – the continuous, dangerous and exhausting layer of military operations. Humans should be preserved for missions where human presence remains indispensable: strategic decisions, judgment under ambiguity, interaction with populations, seizure of critical infrastructure and, when necessary, physical control of terrain. Machines should own the persistence; humans should own the consequence.

Hormuz is an almost perfect laboratory for this model. A cognitive unmanned network could persistently monitor islands, coastlines, shipping lanes and the subsurface domain, detect and isolate threats as they emerge, and create the operational envelope within which manned forces enter only when a mission requires physical seizure or control of a critical point. Large-scale autonomy and manned ground forces are not alternatives. They are complementary: the first creates persistence; the second creates physical control.

The lesson of Hormuz is not that airpower failed. It is that airpower can succeed spectacularly and the strategic problem can still survive. Iran demonstrated how a conventionally weaker state can combine geography, inexpensive systems, and persistent uncertainty to generate global leverage. Future campaigns will therefore require militaries to move beyond a force architecture optimized mainly to destroy faster and toward one capable of understanding and holding continuously.

A military can destroy a navy, strike thousands of targets, and achieve overwhelming superiority in the air. But after the smoke clears, the most important strategic question may still be remarkably simple: who holds the ground? Hormuz is not an exception to the wars of the future. It may be their preview.

The writer, a colonel in the reserves, authored Israel’s National Artificial Intelligence Strategy and served as a member of the team appointed by the prime minister to formulate Israel’s new defense force-building concept and future IDF budget framework. He is the CEO of G2, a deep-tech AI company focused on cognitive systems and physical AI.

US Navy reveals AIM-424 Malice

Ultra-long-range air-to-air missile has over 460 km. range

• By ANNA AHRONHEIM

The US Navy has released the first official fact file for the AIM-424 Long Range Air-to-Air Missile, known as Malice, providing a detailed public description of a next-generation air-intercept weapon intended to expand the engagement reach of carrier-based and future combat aircraft.

The missile, developed by Raytheon, was disclosed at the Tailhook Symposium in Reno, Nevada last week and is the latest in a series of new air-to-air missiles developed by the US Navy.

According to the Navy, it is developing the Air Intercept Missile (AIM)-424 Long Range Air to Air Missile (LRAAM) “to strengthen fleet defense and maintain a decisive air domain overmatch against advanced threats.”

Malice “directly supports the Department’s contribution to integrated deterrence by increasing range, lethality, and combat effectiveness for Marine and Naval aviation forces that are defending our fleets, our interests, and our homeland.”

The missile is intended for fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-generation aircraft, including the F/A-18E/F and F-35C Lightning II.

According to the fact file released by the Navy, the missile is 13.5 feet (4.1 m.) in length, 13.5 inches (34.3 cm.) in diameter, and has a 26.2-inch (66.5 cm.) wingspan. It weighs 1,500 pounds (680 kg.), uses a solid-propellant rocket motor, and carries a blast-fragmentation warhead. The Navy states its range is “in excess of 250 nautical miles,” placing it well beyond conventional beyond-visual-range weapons such as the AIM-120 AMRAAM.

Navy photographs show four AIM-424 test missiles loaded on an F/A-18E Super Hornet assigned to Air Test and Evaluation Squadron 23 (VX-23), while another image shows that two missiles fit inside the F-35C’s internal weapons bay.

US Navy not yet released certain details on latest ‘Malice’ missile

The Navy has not released details on guidance, targeting, or deployment timelines.

Raytheon President Phil Jasper was quoted by Aviation News as saying that Malice “delivers a generational leap in air dominance combat capability that can outrange any threat.”

According to American defense publications, the main threat the missile aims to deter is China, which has been building up its military for a future confrontation in the Pacific. Beijing has already fielded air-launched anti-ship ballistic and cruise missiles that have ranges of over 1,000 nautical miles.

Malice, the Navy said, “sustains the Department’s first look, first shot, first kill advantage by providing our aviators greater reach, greater survivability and greater tactical flexibility in the air-to-air fight.”

The War Zone (TWZ) news website also reported that the Navy is working on a Compact Air-to-Air Missile (CAAM) that would be used for shorter-range engagements and internal carriage on stealth fighters like the F-35 and even drones.

TWZ reported that the main focus of the CAAM would be on “increasing internal carriage capacity for inner boundary weapon” and that it would be used for short-range engagements against enemy targets.

Earlier this year, the Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division (NAWCWD) put out a contracting notice regarding rocket motor developments to support CAAM and other developments.

ParaZero wins first US government order for DefendAir counter-drone system

• By ANNA AHRONHEIM

Israeli defense-tech company ParaZero Technologies has received its first order for its DefendAir counter-drone system from a US federal government entity, marking the company’s first sale of the system to a US government customer.

The order includes DefendAir net launchers, Net Pods, and on-site operator training by ParaZero personnel, the company announced Tuesday.

The Kfar Saba-based company said the deal reflects growing demand among governments and security organizations for counter-unmanned aerial systems (C-UAS) that can provide a physical interception capability against small drones, particularly around sensitive sites and populated areas.

ParaZero’s DefendAir system incorporates patented net-launching technology. The Net pods are engineered by the company for integration across various platforms to deliver precise and effective neutralization of hostile drones.

The technology, which integrates sensors, real-time monitoring, and automated deployment mechanisms, became a regulatory enabler for commercial drone operators seeking approval for flights over people, as well as other high-risk operations.

These systems rely on autonomous guidance and net-based interception rather than kinetic or explosive methods, making them suitable for urban environments, airports, and sensitive facilities where traditional counter-drone solutions pose unacceptable risks.

The manually operated DefendAir configuration acts as a final layer of defense by allowing security personnel to physically intercept a hostile drone immediately.

The C-UAS system can be operated by individual operators and mobile forces protecting strategic sites.

ParaZero will also provide hands-on training to the US government operators, covering system familiarization, deployment, and practical use. The company said the training component reflects its broader approach to C-UAS, which it describes as providing an operational capability rather than just selling interception hardware.

PARAZERO’S DEFENDAIR neutralizes hostile drones by intercepting them with nets. (ParaZero Technologies)

“Counter-UAS capability is not created when a box arrives. It is created when trained operators can deploy the system confidently and act when seconds matter,” ParaZero CEO Ariel Alon said in a statement released by the company.

“Our approach extends beyond supplying launchers and Net Pods. DefendAir is designed to provide customers with an operational capability supported by training and hands-on preparation. We believe this approach is increasingly important as Counter-UAS solutions move from evaluation to real-world deployment,” he added.

The US order comes as small drones have increasingly become a security concern beyond the battlefield, with government facilities, critical infrastructure, public spaces, and other sensitive locations facing growing exposure to unauthorized or hostile unmanned aircraft.

ParaZero says it has seen growing interest in DefendAir from defense forces, government organizations, security agencies, and defense companies across several international markets.

Earlier this month, the company announced that it received an initial order for its DefendAir Net Pods from a Tier-1 European defense manufacturer.

Alon said that the initial order from the manufacturers points to the fact that there is a growing recognition for net-based interceptors.

“For ParaZero, we believe that integration with established defense manufacturers has the potential to expand the reach of DefendAir beyond individual products and into larger platforms and programs. Each successful integration strengthens our position as an enabling technology provider to the global Counter-UAS market and creates a foundation for broader commercial opportunities as these systems advance,” Alon said.

UVision wins US Army follow-on suicide drone order

• By Globes and ANNA AHRONHEIM

Israeli missile and suicide drone company UVision Air and US defense technology company Mistral have won another contract from the US Army to supply Hero 120 suicide drones. The order is worth $50 million. The Hero 120 has a maximum range of about 40 to 60 kilometers and its duration of operation is about an hour. The loitering munition (LM) can be equipped with various types of warheads, including those designed to hit armored vehicles and personnel.

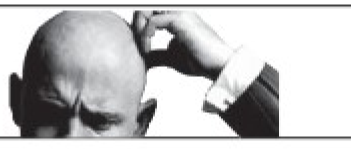
This is a follow-up deal to a huge, multi-year contract that was signed in October 2025, for the supply of suicide drones for $982 million. UVision has its own US subsidiary, but the advantage of Mistral, which is based in Maryland, is its specialization in the integration of security systems and technologies in the US.

UVision has a range of collaborations with various companies, and is very well-known in its field on an international level. Among other things, the company is collaborating with German firm Rheinmetall, and has developed a model for launching suicide drones from a container. The innovative launch platform is important news for the field for several reasons. First and foremost, it allows the use of loitering munitions as part of swarm attacks, in which a large number of drones are used simultaneously. Additional advantages of launching from a container are the possibility of using different platforms and the ability to camouflage the launch system.

The Hero family of LMs are specifically designed to provide front-line forces (including Special Forces) with long-range independent fire capability. With advanced datalink and real-time intelligence for situational awareness, the remote operator is able to maintain ‘eyes’ on the target even at far distances, allowing for accurate strike capabilities in complex operational environments. The operator can maneuver the drone or abort the mission if necessary.

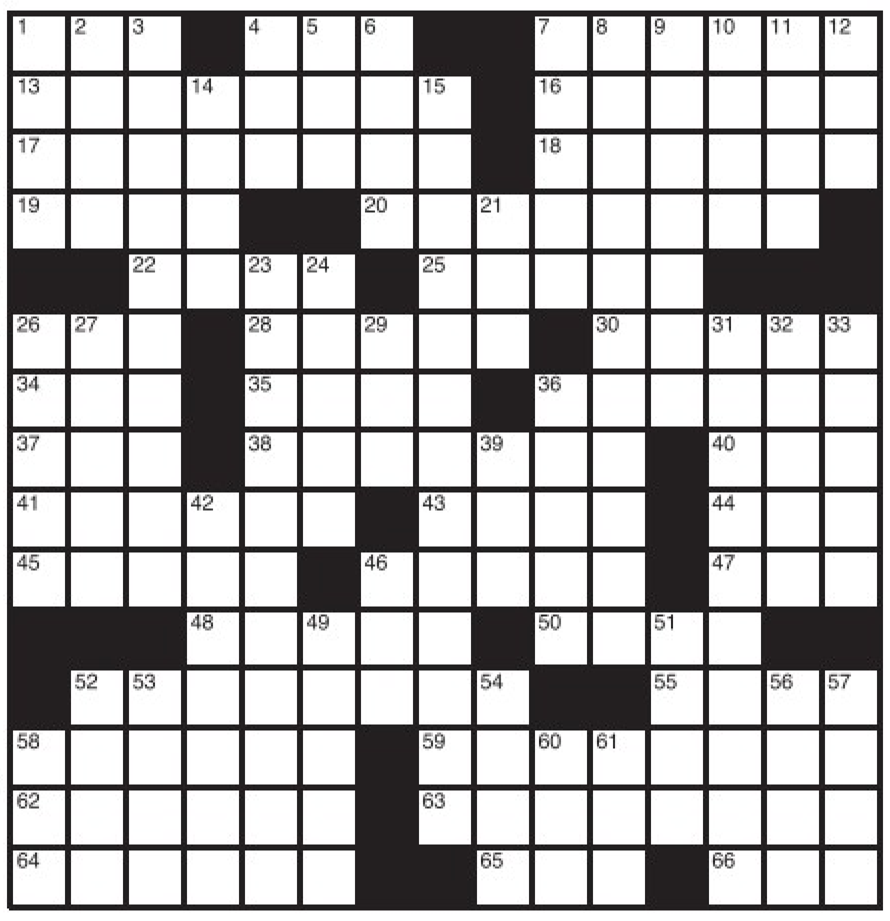
The system can carry out missions from start to finish or be transferred to ground forces to increase the efficiency of the troops.

THE JERUSALEM POST DAILY BRAIN TEASERS



ACROSS
1 "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" network
4 Collision sound
7 Hill partner, in textbook publishing and country music
13 Big sellers
16 "That's old news"
17 "Could there possibly be a good explanation for this?"
18 Skating jumps similar to toe loops
19 Ruckus
20 Motorcycle attachments
22 Hair line?
25 Dangers
26 Disconnect
28 "Get __ town!"
30 Ski area near Reno
34 Gold at the Milano Cortina Olympics?
35 Second, but not first
36 Getting the check
37 __ choy
38 Every evening
40 Prefix with political
41 Revises
43 Assessment, briefly
44 Boater or bowler
45 Greta of classic Hollywood
46 Hustle genre
47 Texting tech
48 Some natural hairstyles
50 Part of QED
52 Trench coat, wig, and big sunglasses, maybe
55 Sando spread
58 Patchy-patterned horses
59 Tacit
62 Certain spot
63 Application that combats dark circles
64 Gobbles (down)
65 Some GEs
66 __/her/hers

DOWN
1 Degs. conferred after defenses
2 Large sushi order
3 Card game that's really taking off?
4 "WonderWater" brand
5 Alias letters
6 "Cleanup on aisle five" impetus
7 Half marathon's 13.1
8 Namesake of Converse's All Star sneaker
9 Participate in decision-making
10 Motorola phone
11 Combative Olympian?
12 Dict. entries
14 Michael of "Juno"
15 Dance around what's really important
21 Opposite of noite
23 Links activity
24 North African capital
26 Emergency kit
27 Sweet smell
29 Comedian Notaro
31 With a lot on the line, or a phonetic hint to 3-, 8-, 15-, and 23-Down
32 Wee hour
33 Showbiz quartets
36 Come in second
39 Sports bar sets

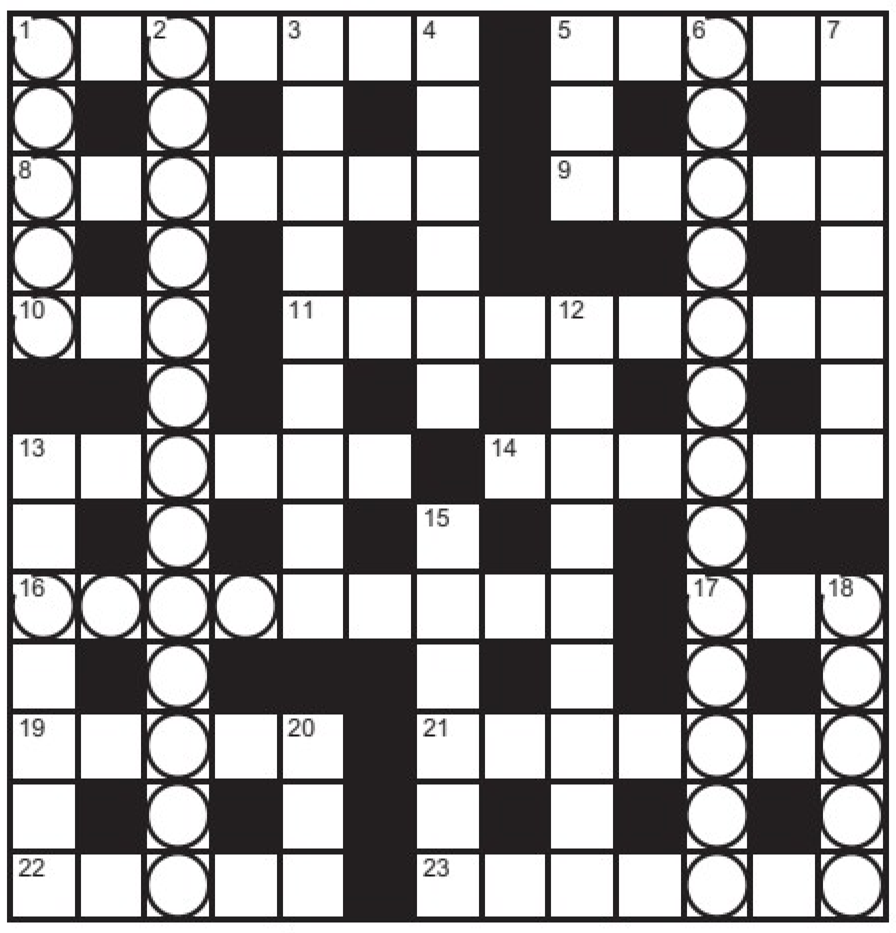


42 Supreme court presence?
46 Eager agreement
49 Tricks
51 "Te quiero, __ mío"
52 Singer Celine
53 Empire also known as the "Realm of the Four Parts"
54 New Age singer who speaks Irish
56 "Totes"
57 "I'll get the check"
58 [Praying emoji]
60 Org. with LSU Tigers, Auburn Tigers, and Missouri Tigers
61 WFH devices

QUICK CROSSWORD

Across
1 Amateur musical entertainment (7)
5 Brief synopsis (CAPER anagram) (5)
8 Revel without restraint (RIOTERS anagram) (7)
9 'The Da___ Code' (5)
10 Alphabet opener (3)
11 Undecided (QUAIL COVE anagram) (9)
13 Like junk mail, usually (6)
14 ___ Doo (6)
16 Reporter's time-related worries (9)
17 Distress signal (3)
19 Common expression that is often hard to translate (5)
21 Garry ___ (first comic strip artist to win a Pulitzer) (7)
22 Muppet with blue fur (5)
23 Followers of the cruel Marquis de Sade (7)

Down
1 "Instant ___" (John Lennon hit) (5)
2 An encore of sorts (NICE NARRATION anagram) (13)
3 "Keep your eye ___" (2,3,4)
4 "Cheerful Little ___," 1930 song with rhyming title (6)
5 A guy with smicha (3)
6 The state of being aware of oneself and the environment (13)
7 ___ Park (Prince's Minnesota house) (YALE SIP anagram) (7)
12 Police unit concerned with gambling, pornography, sex work, liquor & narcotics (4,5)
13 Cause of ruin; downfall (DIG NOUN anagram) (7)
15 ___ Berry Farm: California attraction (6)
18 Stones "With no loving in our ___ and no money in our coats" (5)
20 Dairy farm noise (3)



A	R	O	S	E	■	H	M	A	R	T	■	C	H	A
M	E	D	A	Y	■	O	A	S	I	S	■	O	O	F
E	N	D	L	E	S	S	L	O	O	P	■	N	O	R
N	O	S	E	■	L	E	A	F	■	■	O	T	T	O
■	■	■	S	H	A	D	Y	■	A	B	B	A	■	■
A	R	A	R	A	T	■	A	L	B	R	I	G	H	T
B	I	L	E	S	■	A	N	O	R	A	■	I	O	U
A	D	A	P	T	E	R	■	C	A	N	T	O	R	S
Y	E	S	■	E	L	I	A	S	■	D	R	U	N	K
A	R	K	A	N	S	A	S	■	H	O	U	S	E	S
■	■	A	P	S	E	■	C	O	I	N	S	■	■	■
F	I	R	E	■	■	W	E	L	L	■	T	O	T	O
R	O	O	■	A	B	A	N	D	O	N	S	H	I	P
O	W	L	■	M	A	R	D	I	■	O	T	H	E	R
G	A	L	■	P	O	S	S	E	■	N	O	I	S	Y

CRYPTIC SOLUTION

■	D	■	P	A	C	■	A	■	P	■	S	■
G	A	Z	A	■	O	F	F	W	H	I	T	E
■	L	■	R	■	R	■	T	■	O	■	E	■
A	I	R	D	R	O	M	E	■	N	A	P	E
N	■	■	O	■	L	■	R	■	E	■	O	■
T	U	N	N	E	L	S	■	T	Y	I	N	G
■	L	■	■	■	A	■	P	■	■	■	I	■
S	T	A	S	H	■	R	O	C	K	E	T	S
■	I	■	H	■	S	■	S	■	O	■	■	I
E	M	M	A	■	H	O	S	T	A	G	E	S
■	A	■	A	■	R	■	E	■	L	■	A	■
S	T	A	R	T	E	R	S	■	A	R	C	H
■	E	■	E	■	D	■	S	M	S	■	H	■

5x5

Insert the missing letters to complete ten words - five across the grid and five down.

6158

P		S		S
	P		X	
R		N		L
	R		M	
H		R		H

C	L	A	C	K
A	L	G	A	E
P	A	L	S	Y
E	M	O	T	E
S	A	W	E	D

PREVIOUS SOLUTION (other combinations may be possible)

© THE PUZZLE COMPANY

Reference: Concise Oxford 10th Edition

su|do|ku

© Puzzles by Pappocom

VERY EASY

	5	6					7	
9			8	3		6		5
	1		6		5			4
		7	2		4	9	6	
	2			8			5	
	8	4	9		1	7		
2			3		8		9	
8		5		7	6			2
	7					1	8	

WORD-BUILDER

6198

M O N

G E

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Reference: C.O.D. Tenth Edition

How many words of three or more letters, including plurals, can you make from the five letters, using each letter only once? No foreign words or words beginning with a capital are allowed. There's at least one five-letter word.

TODAY'S GOALS:
Good - **6** Excellent - **8** Amazing - **9**

SOLUTION 6197: got, nog, nogs, not, ons, snog, snot, son, song, sot, tog, togs, ton, tong, tongs, tons.

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TELEVISION

PROGRAMS

KAN HD (Y/H11)

06:04 This Morning - with Arieh Golan
08:00 Chen Liberman and Gili Cohen
10:00 Guetta and Assenheim
12:00 News Flash
12:05 The Future with Hannah Fry - Episode 5
12:30 Innovation Nation - Episode 4
12:52 Dreams of Freedom - Episode 24
13:47 Garlic, Pepper & Olive Oil - Uri Gottlie
14:30 Come Dine with Me 8 - Week North 5
15:00 Sharon and Uri
17:00 In Our Neighborhood - Roi Kais and Elior
17:55 Kan at Six - with Maya Rachlin
18:55 Seven - with Ayala Hasson
19:50 Kan News Edition
21:30 Their Own Money - Episode 2
22:17 Night News - with Sharon Davidovitch
22:47 The Electees 2026 - Part 1
23:15 Lanksy: The Zionist Gangster - Episode 2

KESHET HD (Y/H12)

06:00 News Flash
06:10 The Morning Headlines
07:00 News Flash
07:10 The Morning News - With Niv Raskin
09:30 News Flash
09:35 Morning News - With Nesli and Yoav
11:00 Salt of the Earth
11:50 Food News
12:30 Menachem and Thiya on the Road - Jezreel
13:00 12 PM
15:00 Today"s edition - With Amalya Duek and O
16:55 Five With - Rafi Reshef
18:00 6:00 P.M with...
19:00 Seven PM with - Keren Marciano
19:50 Main Edition
21:30 Exposure with Haim Etgar - The Reality S
23:00 Status Report with Einav and Yaron
23:55 What really happened there? - With Erez

RESHET HD (Y/H13)

06:00 This Morning - Preview
07:00 This Morning - Omer Yardeni & Rotem Isra
09:30 News Flash
09:35 Starting the Day - Paz & Nicola
10:00 News Flash
10:05 Starting the Day - Paz & Nicola
11:00 News Flash
11:05 Starting the Day - Paz & Nicola
12:00 News Flash
12:05 Stethoscope - Episode 339
12:50 Feeling Beautiful
13:00 News Flash
13:05 Feeling Beautiful
13:36 The Voice Israel 6 - Episode 20
14:00 News Flash
14:05 The Voice Israel 6 - Episode 20
15:00 Today"s News - Eli Rachlin
16:55 Today"s Talk - With Lucy Aharish
17:55 Moriya & Berko
18:59 Election Zone - Raviv Druker
19:50 The Main News Edition
21:15 Assenheim - Episode 12
22:25 Assenheim: Panel Discussion - Episode 12
23:00 The Tube - Guy Lerer
23:30 The Past Day - With Tal Shorer
00:00 The Real Estate People

HOT CHANNEL 3 (H3)

08:42 The Guest
09:40 House M.D.
10:22 Secrets of the Mountain
11:19 The Guest
12:17 The Heart Guy 4
13:04 Hacks 2
13:36 House M.D.
14:19 Little House on the Prairie 2
15:07 Days of Our Lives
15:47 The Young and the Restless, Yr. 47
16:24 The Bold and The Beautiful (2 eps)
17:10 Days of Our Lives
17:49 The Young and the Restless, Yr. 47
18:26 Little House on the Prairie 2
19:13 Judge Judy 20
19:34 Secrets of the Mountain
20:31 Benidorm Is Murder
21:15 The Heart Guy 4
22:05 Matlock 2
22:48 House M.D.
23:33 Benidorm Is Murder
00:19 The Guest

HOT ISRAELI ENTERTAINMENT

06:00 Renewal of Broadcasts at 08:00
08:00 Nasrin the Legend
08:27 The Game of Life
09:16 Michaela
09:58 Bat El the Virgin
10:32 Pushers 2
10:58 The Beautubers
11:20 Nasrin the Legend
11:48 The Game of Life
12:37 Michaela
13:19 Connected 12
13:46 My Sister Jackie 3
14:12 Pushers 2
14:40 The Game of Life
15:25 Michaela
16:10 Nasrin the Legend
16:38 Connected 12
17:05 The Game of Life
17:50 Michaela
18:36 My Sister Jackie 3
19:01 Nasrin the Legend
19:34 Connected 12
19:57 The Game of Life
20:42 Michaela
21:31 Bat El the Virgin
21:55 Nasrin the Legend
22:25 Connected 12
22:48 The Game of Life
23:35 Michaela
00:20 Nasrin the Legend
00:53 Bat El the Virgin
01:17 Hezi & Sons
01:46 My Sister Jackie 3
02:11 I BUTTERFLY
02:38 The Beautubers
02:57 Full Moon 2
03:27 My Sister Jackie 3
03:52 Renewal of Broadcasts at 08:0

HOT ZONE (H5)

07:08 Chicago Fire 13
07:50 NCIS 23
08:33 Chicago Med 10
09:15 Boston Blue
09:58 Law & Order: SVU 27
10:39 Chicago Fire 13
11:21 NCIS 23
12:04 FBI 7
12:46 NCIS: Sydney
13:31 Chicago Med 10
14:13 Boston Blue
14:56 Law & Order: SVU 27
15:37 NCIS 23
16:20 FBI 7
17:02 Chicago Med 10
17:44 Chicago Fire 13
18:26 Boston Blue
19:09 Law & Order: SVU 27
19:50 FBI 7
20:32 NCIS: Sydney
21:17 NCIS 23
22:00 Boston Blue
22:43 Chicago Med 10
23:25 Chicago Fire 13

YES TV DRAMA

07:00 Sister Boniface 3
07:50 My Brilliant Friend 4
08:58 The Way Home
09:47 Suits 6
10:35 Yes Man 2
11:09 Sister Boniface 3
11:59 Sullivan"s Crossing 4
12:49 My Brilliant Friend 4
13:57 Yes Man 2
14:31 Suits 6
15:19 Sister Boniface 3
16:09 The Way Home
16:58 Suits 6
17:46 My Brilliant Friend 4
18:54 Yes Man 2
19:28 The Way Home
20:13 Sullivan"s Crossing 4
21:00 The Hardacres 2
21:47 Believe Me
22:35 Lama Mi Met
23:05 You Shall Not Lie 2
00:07 The Green Veil
00:36 A Remarkable Place To Die
01:23 Lama Mi Met
01:53 You Shall Not Lie 2
02:53 The Green Veil

YES TV ACTION

06:05 Ncis 22
06:50 Law & Order (2022) 25
07:35 Law & Order (2022) 25
08:20 9-1-1 Season 9
09:05 Chicago Fire 13
09:50 Chicago Fire 13
10:35 The Hunting Party 2
11:20 The Betrayal
12:10 Ncis 22
12:55 Law & Order (2022) 25
13:40 Law & Order (2022) 25
14:25 Chicago Fire 13
15:10 Chicago Fire 13
15:55 The Hunting Party 2
16:40 The Betrayal
17:30 Ncis 22
18:15 Law & Order (2022) 25
19:00 Law & Order (2022) 25
19:45 9-1-1 Season 9
20:30 Chicago Fire 13
21:15 Chicago Fire 14
22:00 Revival
22:50 The Machinery
23:40 From 3
00:30 Evil 4
01:25 Evil 4
02:25 From 3

YES TV COMEDY

06:45 The Simpsons 37
07:10 The Simpsons 37
07:35 Community 3
08:00 Community 3
08:25 Periferya Imperya
08:55 Periferya Imperya
09:25 Brooklyn 99 S2
09:50 Brooklyn 99 S2
10:15 Married With Children 4
10:40 Married With Children 4
11:05 That 70"s Show 4
11:30 That 70"s Show 4
11:55 3rd Rock From The Sun 3
12:20 3rd Rock From The Sun 3
12:45 The Office 9
13:10 The Office 9
13:35 The Simpsons 37
14:00 The Simpsons 37
14:25 Community 3
14:50 Community 3
15:15 Periferya Imperya
15:45 Periferya Imperya
16:15 Brooklyn 99 S2
16:40 Brooklyn 99 S2
17:05 Married With Children 4
17:30 Married With Children 4
17:55 That 70"s Show 4
18:20 That 70"s Show 4
18:45 3rd Rock From The Sun 3
19:10 3rd Rock From The Sun 3
19:35 The Office 9
20:00 The Office 9
20:25 Brooklyn 99 S2
20:50 Brooklyn 99 S3
21:15 Married With Children 4
21:40 Married With Children 4
22:05 That 70"s Show 4
22:30 That 70"s Show 4
22:55 3rd Rock From The Sun 3
23:20 3rd Rock From The Sun 3
23:45 The Office 9
00:15 The Office 9
00:40 The Simpsons 37
01:05 The Simpsons 37
01:30 Community 3
01:55 Community 3

MIDDLE EAST TV (Y109/H150)

11:30 The 700 Club
12:30 It"s Supernatural
13:00 ISN Mentoring Programming
14:00 The Spirit - Led Life
14:30 Today With God With Dr. Randy Weiss
15:00 The Man on the Eiffel Tower
16:30 Isik Abla
17:00 Living Unbroken
17:30 Miracles from Heaven
18:00 Insider
18:30 It"s Supernatural
19:00 The 700 Club
20:00 Wonders Without Numbers with David Rives
21:00 It"s Supernatural
21:30 Israel Daily
22:00 One America News Network
23:00 Manna Fest with Perry Stone
23:30 Global Glory
00:00 Good Week Israel
00:30 The Man on the Eiffel Tower

HISTORY (Y37/H43)

06:15 The Curse of Oak Island 12 - Ep. 11
06:56 The Proof Is Out There: Unexplained - Ep
07:36 The Fast History Of 2 - Ep. 4
07:56 History"s Greatest Mysteries - Ep. 10
08:36 Pawn Stars 25 - Ep. 13
09:16 Kevin Konstner"s The West - Ep. 7
09:58 Gangland Chronicles - Ep. 9
10:19 The Curse of Oak Island 12 - Ep. 11
11:01 The Proof Is Out There: Unexplained - Ep
11:40 The Fast History Of 2 - Ep. 4
12:00 History"s Greatest Mysteries - Ep. 10
12:40 Pawn Stars 25 - Ep. 13
13:21 Kevin Konstner"s The West - Ep. 7
14:03 Gangland Chronicles - Ep. 9
14:24 The Curse of Oak Island 12 - Ep. 11
15:06 The Proof Is Out There: Unexplained - Ep
15:45 The Fast History Of 2 - Ep. 4
16:05 History"s Greatest Mysteries - Ep. 10
16:46 Pawn Stars 25 - Ep. 13
17:27 Kevin Konstner"s The West - Ep. 7
18:09 Gangland Chronicles - Ep. 9
18:30 The Curse of Oak Island 12 - Ep. 12
19:11 The Proof Is Out There: Unexplained - Ep
19:51 The Fast History Of 2 - Ep. 5
20:12 History"s Greatest Mysteries - Ep. 11
20:52 Pawn Stars 25 - Ep. 14
21:33 Kevin Konstner"s The West - Ep. 8
22:15 Gangland Chronicles - Ep. 10
22:37 The Curse of Oak Island 12 - Ep. 12
23:18 The Proof Is Out There: Unexplained - Ep
23:58 The Fast History Of 2 - Ep. 5
00:16 History"s Greatest Mysteries - Ep. 10
00:57 Pawn Stars 25 - Ep. 13
01:37 Kevin Konstner"s The West - Ep. 7
02:19 Gangland Chronicles - Ep. 9
02:39 Clip Time - Ep. 7
03:10 Clip Time - Ep. 8
03:40 Clip Time - Ep. 9
04:12 Clip Time - Ep. 10
04:42 Clip Time - Ep. 11

CLASSICA HD

06:26 Classica Spotlight
07:00 Mozart: Piano Concerto No. 12, K 414
07:28 Rota: The Godfather Suite
07:40 Choral Music by Bach, Schutz et al.
08:55 Strauss: Piano Quartet in C minor, Op.13
09:36 Behind the Scenes: Zurich Opera House
10:30 Saint-Saens: Polonaise for Two Pianos
10:41 Classica Spotlight
11:01 For Cello and Fortepiano: Beethoven
11:52 Documentary: Soulscapes
13:24 Bach: Partita for Violin No.2 (BWV 1004)
13:57 Bach: Italian Concerto and Chaconne
14:30 Haydn: Symphony No. 94, Hob. I:94 (2001)
15:03 Tales of Two Cities: Leipzig-Damascus
16:42 Mozart: Violin Concerto No. 3 (2014)
17:07 Ice Dance: Swan Lake (2015)
18:45 Rina Sala Gallo Piano Competition 2022
19:47 Le Grand Orgue in Concert
20:57 Schubert: Four Impromptus, Op. 90
21:25 Copland: Appalachian Spring
21:50 Classica Spotlight
22:03 Tchaikovsky: The Nutcracker (2012)
23:38 Beethoven: Triple Concerto, Op. 56
00:20 Bach: Brandenburg Concerto No. 6 (2021)
00:36 Shostakovich: Chamber Symphony Op. 110a
01:00 Triple Concerto, Symphonie Fantastique
02:37 Mahler: Symphony No. 2 (Chung)
04:03 Discovering Masterpieces
04:30 Mahler: Symphony No. 2 (Boulez)

YES DOCU (Y8)

09:00 You Can Call Me Bill An intimate portrait of William Shatner's personal journey over nine decades on this Earth. Film strips away all the masks he has worn and reveals the man behind it all. Dir. Alexandre O. Philippe. 2023
10:40 Revolution Rent In this groundbreaking ode to the beloved musical, actor and director Andy Senor travels to his exiled parents' homeland of Cuba to stage the country's first production of RENT. 2019
12:10 Surviving Earth Ep.4 An 8-episode miniseries that explores Earth's major mass extinction events and the creatures that survived them. The series showcases prehistoric landscapes and creatures from 450 million years ago to the ice ages. 2026
12:55 Kingdom Of Dreams Ep.4 Documentary series tells the story of high fashion from the early 1990s through the 2010s, a period during which it exploded out of traditional, elite kingdoms of style to become a truly global phenomenon. UK. 2022.
13:45 She Looks Like Me Jen Bricker, born without legs and adopted in the US, idolizes gymnast Dominique Moceanu - only to discover they share a life-changing secret. Dir.
Torquil Jones. USA, 2024
15:15 This Is Bob Hope Film explores the famous entertainer's life with unprecedented access to his personal archives and interviews with Woody Allen, Margaret Cho, Conan O'Brien, Tom Selleck and Brooke Shields. Dir. John Scheinfeld. 2017.
16:35 The Secret Lives of 4 Years Old (Israel) Original and exciting Israeli version for the successful series! 12 children come to a kindergarten networked with cameras and microphones. Get a close look into the complex and magical world of 4 year-olds. 2019. Ep. 1.
17:20 The Secret Lives of 4 Years Old (Israel) Original and exciting Israeli version for the successful series! 12 children come to a kindergarten networked with cameras and microphones. Get a close look into the complex and magical world of 4 year-olds. 2019. Ep. 2.
18:05 The Secret Lives of 4 Years Old (Israel) Original and exciting Israeli version for the successful series! 12 children come to a kindergarten networked with cameras and microphones. Get a close look into the complex and magical world of 4 year-olds. 2019. Ep. 3.
18:45 Grown Up Over six years after Ron who suffers from cerebral palsy, and his twin brother Yanai were documented in "Once Upon a Boy", director Uri Levi returns to the family as Ron, now 17, faces major decisions about his future. 2025.
19:40 Old Enough! - 1 What can kids do on their own if we just let them? Each episode follows real children, ages 3-6, as they head out into the world by themselves, for the first time, to run every day errands for their parents. 2024
20:05 Old Enough! - 2 What can kids do on their own if we just let them? Each episode follows real children, ages 3-6, as they head out into the world by themselves, for the first time, to run every day errands for their parents. 2024
20:30 Surviving Earth Ep.5 An 8-episode miniseries that explores Earth's major mass extinction events and the creatures that survived them. The series showcases prehistoric landscapes and creatures from 450 million years ago to the ice ages. 2026
21:15 The Secret Lives of 5 Years Old 5 - 1 The beloved series returns for a fifth season - this time during wartime. After October 7, the filmmakers revisit the children to see how they cope with a world turned upside down. 2026
22:00 Yana Documentary. Adopted as an infant, a 23-year-old girl travels to Ukraine in search of her biological mother. Dir. Noah Dulberg. Israel, 2020.
22:55 Gloria Gaynor: I Will Survive After overcoming traumatic events in her life, Gloria Gaynor rebuilt her life by earning a degree in psychology and investing her own resources to produce the Grammy winning gospel record Testimony in her 70s. 2023.

CHANNEL 8 (H8)

06:02 Glenn Close: a Feminist Force
06:55 Michal Jackson: The Trial
07:45 Queen Camilla
08:35 Violent Earth
09:20 New: The Day Bulgarian Jews were Saved
10:30 Match Game
12:00 Glenn Close: a Feminist Force
12:55 Queen Camilla
13:45 Violent Earth
14:25 New: The Day Bulgarian Jews were Saved
15:35 Match Game
17:05 Queen Camilla
17:55 New: The Day Bulgarian Jews were Saved
19:05 Match Game
20:34 Violent Earth
21:15 WILD SUMMER
22:10 Bardot
23:45 Secrets of female orgazms
00:35 WILD SUMMER
01:30 Bardot
03:05 Secrets of female orgazms
03:55 WILD SUMMER

MEZZO FULL (H195)

11:02 Gergely Madaras: Dvorak, Franck Classical. Orchestre Philharmonique Royal de Liege and Gergely Madaras (conductor) performing works by Dvorak (cello concerto, op. 104) and Franck. With Victor Julien-Laferriere (cello). Liege, 2021.
12:33 Gergely Madaras: Rachmaninoff, Dohnanyi Rachmaninoff: Piano Concerto No. 2 in C minor, Op. 18; Dohnanyi: Symphony No. 2 in E major, Op. 40. Orchestre Philharmonique Royal de Liege and Nikolay Lugansky (piano) led by Gergely Madaras. 2024.
14:22 InterMezzo A selection of short musical clips and artmusic - enjoy a variety of genres from Jazz to Classical music.
14:52 Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau: Last Words Documentary. A deep insight into the extraordinary artistic life of one of the most famous and prolific lieder singers of our time. Dir.: Bruno Monsaingeon. 2013.
15:45 Dance: Creature - Akram Khan Creature by choreographer Akram Khan performed by the English National Ballet. Jeffrey Cirio (Creature), Erina Takahashi (Marie), Stina Quagebeur (Doctor), Ken Saruhashi (Captain), and others. 2021.
17:12 Claudio Abbado: Brahms Berliner Philharmoniker, Eric Ericson Chamber Choir, Bryn Terfel (baritone), Barbara Bonney (soprano) led by Claudio Abbado performs Brahms's Ein Deutsches Requiem. Musikverein, Vienna, 1997.
18:32 InterMezzo A selection of short musical clips and artmusic - enjoy a variety of genres from Jazz to Classical music.
19:00 Verdi: I Lombardi alla prima crociata Opera in 4 acts. Orchestra and Choir de l'Opera Royal de Wallonie-Liege led by Daniel Oren. Marco Ciaponi (Arvino), Goderdzi Janelidze (Pagano), Aurore Daubrun (Viclinda). Liege, 2023.
21:30 Harold Lopez-Nussa - Jazz a Vienne Harold Lopez-Nussa (piano), Gregoire Maret (harmonica), Luques Curtis (double bass), Natascha Rogers (percussion), and Ruy Adrian Lopez-Nussa (drums) perform at Jazz a Vienne Festival, 2023.
22:19 Chucho Valdes - Jazz a Vienne Chucho Valdes (piano), Ramon Alvarez (vocals), Luis Beltran (alto saxophone), Carlos Averhoff Jr. (tenor saxophone), Eddy De Armas Jr. (trumpet) and others perform at Festival Jazz a Vienne, 2024.
23:25 Keyon Harrold - Jazz de Montreal Keyon Harrold (trumpet), Burniss Travis and Jermaine Paul (bass), Charles Haynes (drums), Shedrick Mitchell (keys), Randy Runyon (guitar), Malaya and Stout (vocal) at the 2024 Montreal Jazz Festival.
01:19 Mahler: Symphony No. 9 - Jonathan Nott Orchestre de la Suisse Romande led by Jonathan Nott performs Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 9 in D major. Victoria Hall, Geneva, 2023.
02:46 Intl. Conducting Competition Rotterdam International Conducting Competition Rotterdam 2025.
04:16 Quatuor Arod: Mozart, Beethoven, Debussy Quatuor Arod perform Mozart's String Quartet No. 19 in C major Op. 10, No. 6, KV. 465, Beethoven's String Quartet No. 11 in F minor Op. 95, and Debussy's String quartet in G minor Op. 10. Paris 2022.
05:44 The Sound Weavers The Sound Weavers: Ludovico Einaudi, Hauschka, Joep Beving, Hania Rani. The documentary traces the journey of some of the protagonists of the neoclassical genre. Dir.: Anne-Kathrin Peitz. 2021.

MOVIES

HOT CINEMA 1 (H16)

06:40 Mr. & Mrs. Smith John and Jane Smith are a normal married couple, working normal jobs--Well, if you can call secretly being assassins "normal". With Angelina Jolie, Brad Pitt. (2005).
08:38 Mission: Impossible- The Final Reckoning Action. Hunt and the IMF pursue a dangerous AI called the Entity that's infiltrated global intelligence. Cast: Tom Cruise, Hayley Atwell. Dir.: Christopher McQuarrie (USA, 2025).
11:24 The Pursuit of Happyness A struggling salesman takes custody of his son as he's poised to begin a life-changing professional endeavor. With Will Smith, Thandie Newton (2006)
13:19 The Last Samurai Action. An American officer sent to Japan to assist in the suppression of a Samurai revolt is captured and switches loyalties. Cast: Tom Cruise, Ken Watanabe. Dir.: Edward Zwick (USA, 2003).
15:50 Terminator 2: Judgment Day A cyborg is sent back from the future to kill John Connor before he can grow up to lead the resistance...With Arnold Schwarzenegger, Linda Hamilton (1991)
18:05 Safe House A rookie CIA agent goes on the run with a rogue former intelligence officer, after a South African safe house comes under attack by gunmen. With Denzel Washington, Ryan Reynolds (2012)
19:58 Jumanji: The Next Level As they gang returns to rescue one of their own, the players will have to brave parts unknown to escape the world's most dangerous game. Cast: Dwayne Johnson, Kevin Hart. Dir.: Jake Kasdan (USA,2019).
22:00 2012 (2009).
00:34 Project Hail Mary Sci-Fi. A science teacher wakes up alone on a spaceship. As his memory returns, he uncovers a mission to stop a mysterious substance killing Earth's sun. Cast: Ryan Gosling. Dir.: Phil Lord (USA 2026)

HOT CINEMA 2 (H17)

06:18 Broadcasts will Resume Shortly Broadcasts will Resume Shortly.
06:24 I.T. Thriller. A successful businessman finds himself in a deadly game of cat-and-mouse when his IT consultant starts stalking his daughter and threatens his company and his life. With Pierce Brosnan (2016)
08:00 Along Came a Spider When a congressman's daughter is kidnapped from a private school by a teacher, it sets in motion someone who has a score to settle with the kidnapper. With Morgan Freeman (2001)
09:43 Greenland Action. A family struggles for survival in the face of a cataclysmic natural disaster. Cast: Gerard Butler, Morena Baccarin. Dir.: Ric Roman Waugh (USA, 2020).
11:43 The Lost City of Z A true-life drama, centering on British explorer Col. Percival Fawcett, who disappeared while searching for a mysterious city in the Amazon in the 1920s. With Charlie Hunnam, Robert Pattinson (2017)
14:02 Blood Father An ex-con reunites with his estranged wayward 17-year old daughter to protect her from drug dealers who are trying to kill her. With Mel Gibson, Erin Moriarty (2016)
15:31 Role Play Action. Emma has a secret life as an assassin for hire, which her husband discovers when they decide to spice up their marriage with some role play. Cast: Kaley Cuoco. Dir.: Thomas Vincent (USA, 2024)
17:12 In the Lost Lands Action. A queen sends a powerful sorceress to the ghostly wilderness of the Lost Lands in search of a magical power. Cast: Milla Jovovich, Dave Bautista. Dir.: Paul Anderson (German Republic, 2025).
18:53 The Contractor A discharged U.S. Army Special Ops Forces sergeant risks everything for his family when he joins a private contracting organization. Cast: Chris Paine, Kiefer Sutherland. Dir.: Tarik Saleh (USA, 2022)
20:36 Lake Placid Horror Comedy. A group of well-equipped investigators goes to a lake in New England in search of a monster. Cast: Bridget Fonda, Bill Pullman. Dir.: Steve Miner (USA, 1999).
22:00 She Rides Shotgun Drama. A girl marked for death must fight and steal to stay alive, learning from the most frightening man she knows: her father. Cast: Taron Egerton, Ana Sophia Heger. Dir.: Nick Rowland (USA, 2025).
23:58 Plane Action. A pilot finds himself caught in a war zone after he's forced to land his commercial aircraft during a terrible storm. Cast: Gerard Butler. Dir.: Jean-Francois Richet (UK, 2023).
01:44 The Expandables 3 Action. Barney Ross sets up a new team of mercenaries and heads to Somalia to fight a vicious arms dealer. With Sylvester Stallone, Arnold Schwarzenegger. (2014)

HOT CINEMA 3 (H18)

06:45 Marry Me Music superstar Kat decides to impetuously marry an audience member during her concert after she learns of her fiance's infidelity. Cast: Jennifer Lopez, Owen Wilson. Dir.: Kat Coiro (USA, 2022).
08:34 About My Father Comedy. A man's fiancee encourages him and his old-school Italian immigrant father to spend the weekend with her wealthy and eccentric family. Cast: Robert De Niro. Dir.: Laura Terruso (USA, 2023).
10:03 Intolerable Cruelty A divorce lawyer and his client's wife using marriage to fuel her lifestyle engage in a ruthless romantic pursuit to out-swindle each other. With George Clooney, Catherine Zeta-Jones. Dir. Joel Coen (2003)
11:42 Identity Thief A grey businessman discovers he is sharing his identity with another. This is Diana, who lives on his expense. Cast: Jason Bateman, Melissa McCarthy. Dir: Seth Gordon. (USA, 2013).
13:32 Freaky Tales Comedy. Four interconnected stories set in 1987 Oakland, CA. celebrate the love of music, movies, people, places, and memories. Cast: Pedro Pascal, Ben Mendelsohn. Dir.: Anna Boden (USA, 2024).
15:18 Back to the Future Part III Comic Fantasy. The 3rd part of the "Back to the Future" trilogy takes place in the Wild West. Marty travels to 1885 to save Doc. Cast: Michael J. Fox, Christopher Lloyd. Dir: Robert Zemeckis (US 1990)
17:14 Hot Pursuit An uptight and by-the-book cop tries to protect the outgoing widow of a drug boss as they race through Texas pursued by crooked cops and murderous gunmen. With Reese Witherspoon, Sofia Vergara (2015)
18:41 Sex Tape Comedy. A young couple wake up to discover that the sex tape they made the evening before has gone missing, leading to a frantic search. Cast: Jason Segel, Cameron Diaz. Dir.: Jake Kasdan (USA, 2014).
20:15 Oh. What. Fun. Comedy. After Claire's family leaves her home alone on Christmas, she sets off on an impromptu adventure of her own. Cast: Michelle Pfeiffer. Dir.: Michael Showalter (USA, 2025).
22:00 Ed TV Comedy. Ed Pekurny, who works in a video store, is chosen to star in a television show that films his life 24 hours a day. Cast: Woody Harrelson, Matthew McConaughey. Dir.: Ron Howard (USA, 1999).
00:01 What Happens in Vegas For legal reasons, a man and a woman have to live as a couple for a limited period of time. At stake is a large amount of money. With Cameron Diaz, Ashton Kutcher (2008)
01:38 Baywatch The head lifeguard and his new recruits uncover a criminal plot. With Dwayne Johnson, Zac Efron, Alexandra Daddario (2017)

HOT CINEMA 4 (H19)

07:35 Beating Hearts Drama. Local rebellious teenager Clotaire falls for his schoolmate Jackie, but gang violence leads him to a darker destructive path. Cast: Francois Civil. Dir.: Gilles Lellouche (France, 2024).
10:14 Bolero Drama. In 1928 Paris, choreographer Ida Rubinstein commissions Maurice Ravel to compose the music for her next ballet. Cast: Raphael Personnaz. Dir.: Anne Fontaine (France, 2024).
12:14 Thirteen Lives Drama. A rescue mission assembles in Thailand where a group of boys and their coach are trapped in underground caves that are flooding. Cast:Viggo Mortensen, Colin Farrell. Dir.:Ron Howard (USA, 2022)
14:40 The Post A cover-up pushes a publisher and an editor to join a battle between the press and the government. Cast: Meryl Streep, Tom Hanks. Dir.: Steven Spielberg (USA, 2018).
16:35 Sidelined: The QB and Me Drama. A dancer and a quarterback fight against their feelings for each other as their post-grad future threatens to keep them apart. Cast: Siena Agudong, Noah Beck. Dir.: Justin Wu (USA, 2024).
18:15 Interpreter Ali Ungar discovers in his 80s a book written by an SS soldier describing how he killed his parents back in Slovakia. Cast: Peter Simonischek. Dir.: Martin Sulik (Slovakia, 2018).
20:09 Bonjour Tristesse Drama. Cecile's relaxing summer with her father in the south of France is upended by the arrival of the enigmatic Anne. Cast: Lily McInerny, Chloe Sevigny. Dir.: Durga Chew-Bose (UK, 2024).
22:00 Monsieur Aznavour Drama. Follows the beginnings of the iconic French-Armenian singer, songwriter and actor, Charles Aznavour. Cast: Tahar Rahim, Bastien Bouillon. Dir.: Mehdi Idir, Grand Corps Malade (France, 2024).
00:11 Charlie St. Cloud Drama. Charlie St. Cloud has been given the gift of seeing his deceased brother; but when he falls in love, he faces a dilemma. With Zac Efron, Amanda Crew (2010)
01:50 The Apprentice Drama. The rise of Donald Trump in the real-esate business in 1970s and '80s New York with the help of infamous lawyer Roy M. Cohn. Cast: Sebastian Stan, Jeremy Strong. Dir.: Ali Abbasi (Canada, 2024)

YES MOVIES DRAMA (1)

08:09 On The Basis Of Sex Drama. The true story of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, her struggles for equal rights, and the early cases of a historic career. With: Felicity Jones, Armie Hammer. Dir: Mimi Leder. 2018.
10:10 While We're Young Comedy-drama. A childless New York couple befriend a young hipster couple and begin enjoying their energy. With Ben Stiller, Naomi Watts, Adam Driver, Amanda Seyfried (2014)
11:49 The Professor And The Madman Drama. A Professor begins work compiling words for the first edition of the Oxford English Dictionary in the mid 19th century, and receives over 10,000 entries from a patient at Broadmoor Criminal Lunatic Asylum.
13:54 Victoria and Abdul Queen Victoria strikes up an unlikely friendship with a young Indian clerk named Abdul Karim. Cast: Judi Dench, Ali Fazal, Tim Pigott-Smith. Dir. Stephen Frears. UK, 2017.
15:46 Unstoppable The true story of wrestler Anthony Robles, who was born with one leg, and won a national championship while competing at Arizona State University. With: Jharrel Jerome, Jennifer Lopez. Dir: William Goldenberg. USA, 2024.
17:50 High Strung When a violinist busking in the New York subway encounters a classical dancer on scholarship at a prestigious school, sparks fly. With Keenan Kampa, Nicholas Galitzine (2016)
19:28 Chocolat A single mother and her 6 year old daughter open a chocolate shop in a small French village and rock the community. With Juliette Binoche, Johnny Depp (2000)
21:30 Ride Like A Girl The story of Michelle Payne, the first female jockey to win the Melbourne Cup. With: Teresa Palmer, Sam Neill, Sullivan Stapleton. Director: Rachel Griffiths. Australia, 2019.
23:10 Chasing Mavericks A young surfer out to surf the most dangerous wave in California befriends a legendary surfer who takes him under his wing. With Gerard Butler, Jonny Weston. (2012).

YES MOVIES ACTION (2)

08:09 G20 Terrorists take over the G20 summit with President Sutton, bringing her governing and military experience to defend her family, company, and the world. With: Viola Davis, Anthony Anderson. Director: Patricia Riggen, 2025.
09:58 Big Game A young teenager camping in the woods helps rescue the US president when Air Force One is shot down near his campsite. With Samuel L. Jackson (2014)
11:30 Project Hail Mary A science teacher (Ryan Gosling) wakes up alone in space with no memory. Recovering his past, he discovers a mission to save the Sun and an unexpected friendship that could save humanity. Dir. Phil Lord. 2026
14:06 Oblivion A solitary drone repairman assigned to Earth, its surface devastated after alien attack, reconsiders his tasks after an unexpected discovery. With Tom Cruise, Morgan Freeman, Olga Kurylenko (2013)
16:11 The Bricklayer An ex-CIA agent is reactivated when an extortionist targets the agency. With: Aaron Eckhart, Nina Dobrev. Director: Renny Harlin. USA, 2023.
18:02 The Gunman A sniper on a mercenary assassination team kills the Congolese minister of mines and must flee. Years later, he himself becomes a target. With Sean Penn, Idris Elba, Javier Bardem (2015)
19:58 Road House Ex-UFC fighter Dalton takes a job as a bouncer at a Florida Keys roadhouse, only to discover that this paradise is not all it seems. With: Jake Gyllenhaal, Daniela Melchior. Director: Doug Liman. USA, 2024.
22:00 She Rides Shotgun A girl marked for death must fight to stay alive, learning from the most frightening man she knows: her father. An adaptation of Jordan Harper's novel. With: Ana Sophia Heger, Taron Egerton. Dir.: Nick Rowland. USA, 2025.
00:48 King Of Killers Garan is a part of a group of international hitmen who are contracted to take out the most dangerous killer in the world, only to find out that they're the ones being hunted. Director: Kevin Grevioux. 2023.

YES MOVIES COMEDY (3)

08:06 Piece By Piece A vibrant journey through the life of Pharrell Williams, told through the lens of LEGO animation. With: Pharrell Williams, Kendrick Lamar. Director: Morgan Neville. USA, 2024.
09:41 Little Fockers When Jack experiences health problems, he appoints Greg as the head of the family. But will he be up for it? With Robert De Niro, Dustin Hoffman (2010)
11:20 Why We"re Killing Gunther A group of assassins are fed up with Gunther, the greatest hitman, and decide to kill him. their plan turns into a series of bungled encounters as Gunther seems to always be one step ahead. With: Arnold Schwarzenegger.
12:55 Beauty Shop A hairstylist annoyed by her boss's bad attitude teaches him a thing or two about business, by opening her own salon. With Queen Latifah, Andie MacDowell (2005)
14:41 Bad Shabbos An engaged interfaith couple are about to have their parents meet for the first time over a Shabbat dinner when an accidental death gets in the way. With: David Paymer, Kyra Sedgwick. Dir: Daniel Robbins. USA, 2024.
16:07 The Big Sick A Pakistan-born Kumail and American-born Emily fall in love despite cultural issues. When she becomes very ill, he finds himself deals with unexpected family drama. Cast: Kumail Nanjiani. Dir. Michael Showalter. 2017.
18:08 Can You Keep A Secret? Comedy. Thinking they're about to crash, Emma spills her secrets to a stranger on a plane. At least, she thought he was a stranger...Until she later meets Jack, her company's young CEO.
19:44 Office Christmas Party When his uptight CEO sister threatens to shut down his branch, a man throws a Christmas party to try to land a big client, but the party gets way out of hand. With Jennifer Aniston (2016)
21:30 Just Getting Started Action comedy. an ex-FBI agent who must put aside his personal feud with a former mob lawyer at a retirement home when the mafia comes to kill the pair. Cast: Morgan Freeman, Tommy Lee Jones. Dir: Ron Shelton.
23:05 Couples Retreat Comedy. Four couples go together on vacation. Three of them don't know that the vacation includes a mandatory couples therapy. With Vince Vaughn, Jason Bateman (2009)
00:38 Ricky Stanicky When three childhood best friends pull a prank that goes wrong, they invent the imaginary Ricky Stanicky to get them out of trouble. With: Zac Efron, John Cena, Andrew Santino. Director: Peter Farrelly. 2024.

EUROSPORT

06:00 Cycling Tour of Spain, Stage 16
08:00 Cycling Renewi Tour
09:30 Discovery Golf
10:00 Snooker Scottish Open: Final
11:30 Cycling Renewi Tour
12:30 Snooker Scottish Open: Final
14:00 Mountain Bike World Cup
15:30 Cycling Renewi Tour
16:30 Cycling Renewi Tour
18:30 Cycling Tour of Spain, Stage 20
19:00 Athletics European Athletics Championship
21:00 Snooker Scottish Open: Final
23:00 Cycling Renewi Tour
00:00 Cycling Tour of Spain, Stage 20
01:00 Snooker Welsh Open, Final
02:30 Cycling Renewi Tour
04:00 Snooker Welsh Open, Final

ARTS&ENTERTAINMENT

Why I loved Dolly Parton and her Dollywood

TRIBUTE

• By CHRIS JONES

CHICAGO – In the middle of Dollywood – a theme park in Tennesse's Smoky Mountains that I have visited 50 times or more – there's a replica of the one-bedroom house in which Dolly Parton grew up in Sevier County, Tennessee, as one of 12 children.

It's not the actual house, although some visitors tend to think so. But it's the same size. And if you stand and peer through the window alongside the moms, dads, and kids in strollers, as I often have, you hear a symphony of people articulating their new understanding of just how far this great American came.

Humble beginnings are a cliché. Parton, though, escaped a space barely big enough for 14 people to turn around. Humble does not do it justice, but palpably, she grew up surrounded by love.

She conquered country music, then Hollywood. Then she became an entrepreneur with her own theme park in nearby Pigeon Forge. Just recently, she'd moved into Dolly's travel stops, taking on the Buc-ee's travel center chain with her all-powerful, blue-collar brand, just as she once had taken on Burt Reynolds and the rest of the sexist movie business.

I now own a cabin up in the mountains above this place and, over the years, plenty of my friends have made fun of me for my obsession with Dollywood and Dolly Parton, the latter fandom being one I share with the former Illinois governor Pat Quinn. I was once in the same room as the governor and Parton (it was when her Broadway *9 to 5: The Musical* was in Chicago) and his face lit up with a smile of a wattage I'd never seen before and surely never will see from him again. I hope he is doing okay today.

Everybody loved Dolly Parton. That sounds like another cliché, but think for a second about how few people in the entertainment business that truly could be said about. America, in case you haven't noticed, has taken sides.

Yet Parton masterfully stayed out of every fight in the culture wars, preaching love, philanthropy, mentorship, and tolerance until her dying breath. Dollywood is in a town with a Trump Store (actually two when I last checked) and yet the LGBTQ+ community is welcomed in Dollywood as part of Parton's loyal fan base.

Nobody ever wanted her to take sides and thus she rarely was asked anything she did not want to answer.

Indeed, it is my firm belief that, whatever the US's divisions, a critical mass of people understood that Dolly Parton must be left alone so we can say that at least one American belongs to everyone.

Even a republic needs its queen, and it was her.

ALAS, THERE is no obvious heir.

Who else do we have who stands for fun, literacy (she put more books in school libraries than any other human), music, and, above all, family?

I attribute some of that complexity to her being born in a part of America far more complex than people think. In the Civil War, Sevier County sided with the northern Union, not the southern Confederacy, even though the state of Tennessee joined the Confederacy.

And its people, many of whom had origins in northern England, Scotland, and Ireland, were fiercely independent in their rural poverty and, of course, isolated by the mountains. They feel far more Appalachian than Southern, which is, of course, true of Parton herself.

I started going to Parton's beloved county when my kids were little, repelled by the high cost and corporatization of Walt Disney World, and yet loving roller coasters and amusement parks. I also thought it not a bad think to teach two boys living in the city of Chicago about the other America. Dollywood thus became our Disneyland – from the Tennessee Tornado to the Wild Eagle to the Mystery Mine with the dead parrot before the big drop.

In the early years, especially, it felt like everyone working in the park was a Parton relative, especially anyone performing bluegrass music: Parton's niece, cousins, uncle. There were 12 kids. That's a lot of relatives. I would take adult friends, especially after I bought the cabin nearby. They'd always say the place exceeded expectations, being charmingly built into the mountains and all.

I never saw Parton at Dollywood, though; when I met her, it was in New York or Chicago, when I was writing about her shows. You'll be shocked to know, she could not have been warmer or lovelier or more self-deprecating and funny. Everyone around her basically just smiled the entire time. Here was a woman known for a "fake" look, so to speak, replete with face-lifts and enhancements of this, that, and the other, who actually was about the most genuine person you could ever meet.

Even with all of her money and fame, she was unchanged and unchangeable. She made so much fun of herself that any potential satirists were disarmed.

These days, my adult kids prefer to hike in the mountains and I have to drag them every Christmas to hear "A Tender Tennessee Christmas" at the Dollywood holiday pageant, which has become my ersatz church.

Alas, of course, Parton was mortal. And, as it appeared on Tuesday, had been doing less well of late than people knew.

I often would walk around Dollywood as someone who has seen a lot of entertainment businesses come and go, wondering what they would do when Parton died. I don't doubt they have their contingency plans, rolling out right now. But this death on this Tuesday will have come as an unexpected shock.

I've often thought the park would see a surge in near-term popularity after Parton's death, and I am sure that will be the case. The trickier time will come after years have gone by and she begins to recede in memory, as all of us eventually do.

But I think most anyone reading this will be gone by the time that becomes an existential problem.

Queens can reign long after they leave us. (Chicago Tribune/TNS)

DOLLY PARTON performs at the Shoreline Amphitheatre in Mountain View, California, in 2016. (Jim Gensheimer/Bay Area News Group/TNS)

World mourns: 'We'll always love you'

• By MUVIJA M and STEFICA BIKESH

LONDON/SYDNEY (Reuters) – In Britain, the King's Guard band played Dolly Parton's "9 to 5" in front of Buckingham Palace. In the United States, the Empire State Building lit up in pink. In Japan, producer Seiji Kameda remembered a singer whose voice "shone like the sun."

Fans across continents, from prime ministers to pop stars, sent out messages of grief and affection after the news came through that the country music legend, songwriter and actress had died on Tuesday aged 80.

Many paid tribute to an artist they said had a rare ability to appeal to audiences across a wide range of political persuasions, age groups, genders and cultures.

"Your songs taught us to fall in love and how to express," Uganda's exiled opposition leader Bobi Wine wrote on X/Twitter. "We will always love you," the rapper-turned-politician added.

British pop icon Elton John called her a "giant of an artist" who had the kindest heart.

"It is hard to imagine living in a world without Dolly," Paul McCartney wrote. Her songwriting, singing and philanthropy were unrivaled in the world of country music, he added.

Britain's Royal Family took to social media to say it was "Remembering the late, great Dolly, who brought joy, comfort and inspiration to so many."

In a message on its X account, it remembered her charitable work, including her Imagination Library that had given free books to millions of children.

It signed off with "We will always love you," echoing Wine's tribute to one of her best-loved songs.

She only played once in Japan, in 1979. But Kameda, a prominent music producer and bassist for the rock band Tokyo Jihen, said he had been captivated by Parton's voice since his first year of junior high school.

"Her voice... will endure forever. Rest in peace," he wrote on X.

'SHE LIVED LOUDLY'

Politicians praised her contributions to society as well as her music.

"I was a huge fan of what Dolly did around literacy around the world," British Prime Minister Andy Burnham told reporters.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said Parton made an enormous difference through promoting education and funding hospitals, and that there would be many broken hearts across his country.

"She lived loudly, and she lived a great life, and she'll be much missed," he told reporters.

In Australia's eastern city of Brisbane, Dolly Parton tribute artist Brooke McMullen said she woke up to messages about the death of the country music star, and thought it was a hoax.

Parton was "one of those people that you just think is going to be around forever," McMullen added. "Her loss is huge."

Part of Parton's appeal came from the stories she told in her songs, said McMullen, who takes her tribute show across the country.

"All of her stories are real life and you can connect," she added.

"Everybody's got at least one of the songs that they connect to, whether it be that was something that their grandmother introduced them to, whether it be they heard that at a wedding that they went to. Everybody has a Dolly Parton song."

British actor Tim Curry, who gained fame for 'Rocky Horror Picture Show,' dead at 80

• By WILL DUNHAM

Tim Curry, the baritone-voiced British actor who pranced to movie fame as a singing, lingerie-clad "sweet transvestite" in the 1975 cult classic *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, has died at the age of 80, Variety and other outlets reported.

A cause of death was not immediately given, but Curry had been in ill health for some time.

Curry appeared in numerous movies, often as a hammy villain, was nominated three times for a Tony Award for Broadway roles, and performed voice work in many animated films and TV shows.

But his best-known role was Dr. Frank N. Furter, which came in his debut film, the outrageous, crowd-pleasing horror-comedy-musical *The Rocky Horror Picture Show,* co-starring Susan Sarandon and Barry Bostwick.

"I'm not much of a man by the light of day. But by night I'm one hell of a lover. I'm just a sweet transvestite from transsexual Transylvania," Curry sang in one scene as he strutted around with garish eye shadow and lipstick, in a skimpy black outfit complete with black stockings and garter belt.

In a 1975 television interview, Curry noted the risk of having his career defined by such an outlandish role – a prescient worry, as it turned out. "When I read it, I just thought it was very, very witty and funny," Curry said, although he confessed to some initial reluctance.

ACTOR TIM CURRY seen at the 10th annual Costume Designers Guild Awards in Beverly Hills, California in 2008. (Phil McCarten/Reuters)

"I mean, I was hesitant in that, if it worked, it might be a difficult thing to shake off. But, really, I've always thought that it (a part) wasn't worth doing unless you took a risk," Curry said.

Among his other films were *Charlie's Angels* (2000), *Muppet Treasure Island* (1996), *The Shadow* (1994), *The Three Musketeers* (1993), *Home Alone 2: Lost in New York* (1992), *Clue* (1985), *Legend* (1985), and *Annie* (1982).

Over-the-top villains

Curry did much of his best work on stage. He was nominated for a Tony, Broadway's top honor, in 1981 for his role as Mozart in *Amadeus*, a tale of the great composer's interaction with jealous rival Salieri. Curry was also nominated for a Tony in 1993 for *My Favorite Year* and in 2005 for his role as King Arthur in the zany *Monty Python's Spamalot*.

Possessing a rich baritone voice, he was in demand as a voice actor for animated films and TV shows. He won a Daytime Emmy Award in 1991 for his voice work on the animated *Peter Pan & the Pirates*.

With his sinister grin and menacing laugh, Curry was frequently cast in Hollywood films as a villain – sometimes with comic overtones, which let him deliver the type of over-the-top performances for which he was famed.

"I do love those roles – they're always the best written," Curry told interviewer Andrew Kay in 2011.

He conceded that some of his movies were mediocre, singling out 1995's *Congo*, a tale of diamond mines and killer gorillas.

"I was really very bad in it," Curry said. "I won a Razzy award for one of the worst performances of the year – and I richly deserved it, too."

A cult following

Curry was born in the English village of Grappenhall, Cheshire, on April 19, 1946. His father, a Royal Navy chaplain, died when he was 12. His mother was a school secretary.

Curry studied drama at Birmingham University.

In 1973, he landed the part of Dr. Frank N. Furter in the original London stage version of *The Rocky Horror Show*. He performed the play in New York and Los Angeles before it was made into a film, renamed as *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*.

The movie was not an instant hit but won a cult following in midnight screenings in New York City and elsewhere, with audience members often dressing up as "Rocky Horror" characters.

Curry withdrew from a British stage production in 2011 due to ill health. In 2013, his agent said that he had suffered a stroke but was recovering "in great humor." From then on he used a wheelchair and reduced his workload. In 2024, he did, however, return to the big screen, appearing in the horror film *Stream*.

Curry, who lived in Los Angeles, never married and had no children. A composer and a singer, Curry also performed with his own rock band and released a handful of albums. (Reuters)

Children's stars team up for Hanukkah tour

• Maariv

Israel's biggest children's entertainment icons are set to join forces for a major live stage production during the holiday season.

The new indoor show, titled "*Kesem Shel Festival – Magshimim Lachem Mishalot*" (A Magical Festival – Making Your Wishes Come True), will bring together top-tier stars including Yuval Hamebulbal Shem-Tov, Tal Mosseri, and Michal HaKtana Weizman for a nationwide tour during Hanukkah.

The holiday production boasts a massive cast of 25 performers. Alongside the main headliners, the lineup features popular family acts and personalities including Zohar Lo Hispakti Kabler, Yotam Gabriel, and Dana Bandana Chaimovitch.

In addition to the live actors, the show will integrate beloved costumed characters like Peter Rabbit, Mickey and Minnie Mouse, and Tuli the Lion.

Directed by Udi Gottshalk and produced by Assi Stav, Elad Yosef, and Magen Sabag, the storyline follows a whimsical journey to the Wish Factory. The narrative explores themes of friendship, hope, and pursuing dreams, blending musical theater with comedy routines.

According to the production team, the show will feature high-budget set designs, elaborate costumes, and synchronized choreography. Audiences can also expect complex acrobatics, modern special effects, and reimagined orchestral arrangements of classic Israeli children's songs.

The musical event is scheduled to tour major entertainment hubs across the country with confirmed stops including Rishon Lezion, Haifa, Jerusalem, and Beersheba.

Additional performance venues and ticket details are expected to be announced in the coming weeks. *